

## Book Reviews

### PRISONS

#### **Medical Care of Prisoners and Detainees.**

Ciba Foundation Symposium 16 (New Series). Amsterdam: Elsevier/Excerpta Medica/North-Holland. 1973. Pp. viii+230. Index 7 pp. Price Dfl. 30.50.

This collection of conference papers describes the medical facilities, or lack of them, in prisons and detention camps in various countries. It is a mine of recondite information. Nowhere, it seems, are the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (1955) wholeheartedly implemented. Professor G. O. W. Mueller, writing about the United States, describes the 'deplorable conditions' revealed in a survey of a Federal Detention Headquarters in New York City. He comments on the 'antediluvian theme of the "hands off" doctrine', which prevents the courts from reviewing the policies of correctional institutions. 'Such judicial passivity towards prisoners' grievances, coupled with the present use of "outrageous" deprivation as a test of standard, indicates that the desirable Standard Minimum Rules have not yet been complied with by one of the most highly developed judicial systems in the world.'

Judicial control of abuses, and democratic control of prison policies, are everywhere hampered by the secrecy which detaining authorities invariably try to maintain. In political detention camps, as opposed to established prison systems, the situation is even more difficult on account of the obscurity of the criteria for detention and the uncertainty about duration.

As individuals, doctors are likely to disapprove of the barbarity of prison regimes and deplore physical assaults on inmates, whether perpetrated unofficially or in the guise of legal punishment. It does not necessarily follow that ethical considerations should dictate withdrawal of medical services, since that could cause inmates to suffer an additional deprivation. The presence of doctors within the system can have an important humanising effect. Medical men who struggle on in unfavourable circumstances, and perform such distasteful tasks as the supervision of floggings or executions should not be condemned too hastily.

The papers draw attention to the difficulties, even under relatively ideal conditions, of providing a normal medical and psychiatric service for prisoners.

Loss of liberty, and the restrictive environment of institutions, leads inevitably to stress, to self absorption, to hypochondriasis and to the attempt to manipulate medical facilities to overcome boredom, dietary restrictions and other painful aspects of penal life. Prison medicine, and especially prison psychiatry, has to contend with the effect of an artificial and generally adverse environment upon the prisoner's ordinary problems of physical and mental health.

In closing the conference, the chairman, Dr. Storr, appealed to persons with knowledge of prisons to do their utmost, within the limitations of the Official Secrets Act and other rules, to produce well-informed books and articles. This could help promote an enlightened public opinion and thereby bring influence to bear upon governments to improve prison standards.

D. J. WEST.

### BRAIN ELECTROPHYSIOLOGY

**Evoked Potentials in Psychology, Sensory Physiology and Clinical Medicine.** By D. REGAN. London: Chapman and Hall. 1972. Pp. xv+328. Index 10 pp. Price £6.00.

The study of evoked EEG activity is of increasing interest in psychophysiology. Over the past decade intriguing associations have been established between the properties of the stimulus used and the evoked cerebral response and also between the latter and certain characteristics of the subject's state of mind, such as his level of vigilance, expectancy and attentiveness to the stimulus. These observations have nourished the hope that the technique might shed some welcome light on the neurophysiology of psychiatric disorders.

However, the research worker entering the field or attempting to assess what it might have to offer is confronted by a disconcerting number of often contradictory reports. It is for such a reader that Dr. Regan has written this admirable guide. He devotes chapters to evoked potentials in relation to the electrical activity of single neurons, sensory information processing and psychological variables; in Chapter 5 he deals with experimental techniques and apparatus. The text is lucid, well ordered, meticulously documented and full of authoritative information. His condensed review of the clinical applications (Chapter 4) may leave some readers hankering

after a more generous account (he gives only half a dozen pages to psychiatric disorders); unfortunately this brevity is a realistic reflection of the paucity of well-conducted clinical research. The bibliography (953 references) and index are both excellent.

The book is highly recommended to anyone working with evoked potentials and should be available for perusal and reference to everyone interested in psychophysiology.

DAVID JULIER.

**Event-Related Slow Potentials of the Brain: Their Relations to Behaviour.** Edited by W. C. McCALLUM and J. R. KNOTT. Elsevier Scientific Publishing Company. 1973. Pp. xi+383. Index 5 pp. Price \$51.90.

Event-related Slow Potentials are changes in the electrical activity of the brain that may go on for several seconds after a stimulus or other recognizable neuropsychological activity. The term comprehends a number of changes of which by far the best known is that christened 'expectancy wave', more than ten years ago, by Grey Walter, and now usually known as 'contingent negative variation' (CNV). The present comprehensive volume is the report of an international conference held more than two years ago. There are sections on methodology, physiology and ontogenetic function and two sections of particular interest to psychiatrists; namely, behaviour and the clinical applications. There is finally a comprehensive bibliography of the many hundreds of papers that have been published on this particular aspect of electrophysiology of the brain in less than ten years.

The volume of work done attests the interest and importance of new methods of investigating electrical activity of the brain. The apparatus required is not expensive or sophisticated but differs significantly from conventional EEG recording, so that few laboratories are equipped to carry out the necessary observations except on a research basis. The development of a new investigatory technique from research to routine use will occur only if it can be shown to be of definite diagnostic or therapeutic value. The EEG itself would never have got beyond being a laboratory tool if its value in the diagnosis and management of epilepsy had not been early demonstrated.

As a research technique the study of the CNV continues to hold out great promise in the areas of attention and conation which have been singularly neglected in general psychology, in contrast to emotion and cognition. There is much of interest to the physiologically-minded psychiatrist in this volume, but it must be regretfully stated that nothing has yet emerged of definite clinical value in diagnosis or treatment. Nevertheless, any psychologist or psychi-

atrist interested in the interaction between mental and neural processes would be well advised to see if the kinds of techniques described in this volume might not be relevant to his projected research.

D. A. POND.

#### CHILDREN

**Adaptive Learning: Behavior Modification with Children.** Edited by BEATRICE A. ASHEM and ERNEST G. POSER. Oxford: Pergamon Press. 1973. Pp. xx+439. Price £6.50.

This is a reasonably well selected collection of reprints describing the application of behaviour modification techniques to children's disorders. Forty-one papers—two of them specially written for this volume—are grouped in four sections dealing with: I. Sub-optimal behaviours within the normal range; II. Emotionally disturbed children; III. Autism and retardation; IV. Training parents and others. The book has a brief introduction to the field, written by the editors, and a concluding section raising issues for further research.

The selection of papers illustrates desensitization and operant techniques with a variety of children's problems. However, the section on mental retardation ignores the important area of training in self-help skills. Another major omission is the lack of reference to the exciting work being done with aggressive and delinquent children and their families (e.g. Patterson, 1973; Phillips *et al.*, 1973).

The compendium would have been even more useful if some papers on methodological issues and attempts at evaluation had been included. Even so, it will prove valuable to those who wish to have their own copies of published papers.

#### REFERENCES

- PATTERSON, G. R. (1973) Reprogramming the families of aggressive boys. In *Behavior Modification in Education* (ed. Thoresen, C.). 72nd Yearbook, NSSE.  
 PHILLIPS, E. L. *et al.* (1973) Achievement Place: Behavior shaping works for delinquents. *Psychology Today*.

WILLIAM YULE.

**Children Under Stress.** By SULA WOLFF. Penguin Books. 1973. Pp. 283. Price 50p.

In recent years there seems to have been a tendency to try to legislate out of existence the unpleasant and noxious influences to which mankind may be exposed; clearly a hopeless task whose attempt sometimes leads to worse consequences. Despite the lawmakers, illness, handicap, hospitalization, breakdown of marriages, unkindness, bereavement will continue, and the more exceptional they become the more stressful for the families and children involved and the more help