

Current Medical Research. A Reprint of the Articles in the Report of the Medical Research Council for the year 1958-1959. London: H.M.S.O. Pp. 56. Price 3s. 6d.

This is a collection of brief reviews of research sponsored by the M.R.C. in certain selected fields. They are written in such a way as to provide information to a wider public than would be reached by the fuller publications which appear in specialized journals. The reviews of special concern to the psychiatrist include a discussion of occupation and coronary disease, of chromosome abnormalities, and of some factors concerned with inattention. They are sandwiched between studies of the chemotherapy of tuberculosis in East Africa and India, of the structure of viruses, interferon, and other subjects. It seems doubtful whether this type of publication is really worth while, and one wonders what purpose it really serves.

DENIS LEIGH.

Psychological Illness: A Community Study. By E. J. R. PRIMROSE, B.Sc., M.D. London: Tavistock Publications, 1962. Pp. 60. 15s.

Dr. Primrose is a general practitioner who looks after the health problems of a parish of 1,700 people in the north of Scotland. He summarizes the characteristics of this community as "a moderately prosperous and stable population of Calvinistic traditions, with tendencies to shotgun weddings and excessive consumption of alcohol, in transition from harder times to the sophistications of modern gadgetry."

The author made a count of all those who had been mentally ill at any time during the year ending 20th February, 1960, and who had come into contact with specified local medical services.

As would be expected from an intensive survey of a small population, most of the prevalence rates were relatively high compared with those of other workers. For example, the rate for neurotic illnesses was 91.1 per 1,000 (two-thirds female), for manic-depressive psychosis 3.5 per 1,000, and for senile psychoses 4.7 per 1,000. The rates found in other intensive studies approach or exceed these figures. However, the rate for alcoholism, 10.0 per 1,000, was very high. Comparison between rates in occupational and other subgroups, or between communities in general, depends on the definition of severity and type of symptoms in each diagnostic category. Unfortunately this crucial matter is not discussed in any detail.

The author found only 3 schizophrenic and 6 manic-depressive patients in his survey. These numbers are too small to support the suggestion that the religions of the area—"guilt-ridden without the safety-valve of a confessional"—may play a part in producing a high proportion of depressions, an analogy with the Hutterites. Moreover "there is a steady flow of young persons mainly to the cities", and some emigrate. In fact the population has increased by only 58 persons since 1801. There is no means of knowing how many of the emigrants have developed psychiatric illnesses.

The second part of the book is devoted to an account of the author's attempt to treat 56 patients in the practice according to the principles he had learned during the course of seminars at the Tavistock Clinic. His observations on the special problem of psychotherapy in a "semi-isolated, single-doctor practice", where the practitioner is intimately involved socially with most of the families in the area, will be read with interest and sympathy. His impression is that 30 patients were much improved as a result of the treatment.

J. K. WING.

The Layman's Guide to Psychiatry. By JAMES A. BRUSSEL, M.D. Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1961. Pp. 235. Price \$1.50.

In view of the tremendous advances in psychiatric treatment in recent years and the wide interest in this subject by the public, there is a need to present in simple language up-to-date knowledge of the value of psychiatry and its limitations in the treatment of mental illness.