Book Reviews

N. Petrilowitsch: Probleme der Psychotherapie alternder Menschen. Bibliotheca Psychia-trica et Neurologica, Fasc. 123. S. Karger AG, Basel/New York 1964. IV + 108 S.; Preis: Fr./DM20.-. The question which the author poses is whether it is possible to advise psychotherapy for ageing people. He answers the question positively in this small volume. The author is much influenced by post-Freudian psychoanalysis. He evolves a system of psychotherapy in which he attempts to utilize the remaining intellectual capacity, environmental possibilities and the attitude of the ageing towards himself and his world.
There are excellent observations of the author on guilt, regret and boredom. The book is extremely difficult to read. It’s existentialist attitude forms a philosophy of old age, the therapeutic value of which will require further study.
W. Scheid: Lehrbuch der Neurologic GeorgThieme-Verlag, Stuttgart 1963. XVI + 735 S., 246 teils mehrfarbige Abb., Ganzleinen; Preis: DM 79.-. This book is meant for the student and postgraduate who wishes to keep up to date. It is written in a very terse style and everywhere based on case material of the authors’ clinic. An entirely new aspect is the stress on social consequences and legal implications of neurological disorders. There is no mention of diseases of advancing years as such. The production is excellent, print and pictures up to the highest standard. A charming appendix contains short biographies of neurologists of the past. There is a selection of references to the literature and a satisfactory index.
Eugen Haagen: Viruskrankheiten des Menschen. Liefg. 10/11. D. Steinkopff Verlag, Darmstadt 1964. 128 S., 2 Abb.; Preis: DM. 30.-. The present 100 pages conclude the first volume of Professor Haagen’s monumental work on viral diseases of men. In the present volume the author deals with myxo viruses, multiform viruses, including para-influenza, adeno-viruses, respiratory viruses and the intriguing group of arbor-viruses. The last chapter concerns itself with miyagawa viruses. All chapters contain ample references to literature and laboratory methods. The ecology of each group is carefully described, particularly in relation to animal hosts and epizoonoses. Owing to the rapid advances in the field the book can never aspire to be entirely up to date, but will form a useful addition to the medical library where it will be helpful to clinician and pathologist who are not specially trained in virology. The book is admirably produced.
O. Gsell: Diseases in the Over 70 Group. Krankheiten der über Siebzigjährigen. Hans Huber, Bern 1964. 344 p., 59 fig., 75 tab.; price: sFr./DM 29.50. Professor Gsell remarks in his preface to these post-graduate lectures given at Basel in 1963, that here are collected, not the experiences of Geriatric Departments or Nursing Homes, but the findings on ageing and the aged of the various institutes and clinics of the Medical Faculty of Basel. It can be stated immediately, that they differ in no way from findings in less august places.
The main accent of the papers is on therapeutic problems and of these the most impressive is by Professor Nissen on “Surgery of the Ageing”, a masterly survey which demonstrates the striking advances in this field. Professor Verzár gives an interesting global account of the present state of experimental gerontology. Other general papers by Professors Wertheman and Gsell delineate the parameters of pathology and internal Medicine. Dr. A. L. Vischer contributes a charming talk on peculiarities of centenarians. In more specialized fields there are good summaries of ophthalmological and oto-logical findings in old people. W. Schueueizer writes an interesting paper on cardiological aspects. Among the neurological papers S. Scheidegger’s paper on senile and presenile Diseases of the CNS appears outstanding. This section is altogether most interesting, Professor Georgi and R. Wuethrich write on the principles of the treatment of neurological conditions in the senium with clarity and precision. Professor Kielholz contributes an article on the therapy of Depression. The section on Nutrition includes a paper by Daniela Gsell which reiterates her well known findings. There follows a short collection of papers on therapeutics which at times look very oldfashioned indeed. Tincture oilLilies of the Valley or Guttae Meunier sound like tales of Hoffman (of the famous guttae?). Professor Gigon has preserved for us these old remedies against arteriosclerosis and for this we ought to be grateful to him. The book is pleasantly produced; at a cost of almost E 3 it is an expensive paper back. There is a satisfactory general index.


The present volume contains several important contributions to the methodology of modern psychiatric research. H. Waelsch and H. Weil-Malherbe deal with present knowledge of neurochemistry, with particular reference to the therapeutic approach. The article is written in English and contains a great deal of material which will be of interest to all who have to cope with patients suffering from brain damage. The paper by Riebeling on the pathological metabolism of the psychoses is rather harder reading. He collected the available data on periodicity, body weight, haematological data, etc. in a critical survey: the result is rather arid: much information does not quite add up. In the section on inborn errors of metabolism on the other hand the information is concise. M. Bleuler’s contribution concerns itself with the endocrinology of Psychiatry. It contains chapters on the effects of hormones on psychology, endocrine functions in schizophrenia and manic-depressive psychoses, and an interesting chapter on endocrine disturbances and constitution. There is a detailed survey of psychiatric syndromes in specific endocrine disorders, from the adenohypophysis to the sex-hormones. This is a valuable collection since the source papers are scattered through the specialist journals. A short article by G. Huber describes the radiological changes (mainly demonstrated by air encephalogram) in psychiatric disorders. In a very large number of chronic psychotic patients and “simple” dementia one is able to demonstrate atrophic changes of the cortex and the ventricular system. D. Ploog writes extensively on “Behaviourism and Psychiatry”. He concerns himself largely with instinctive and affective behaviours, with a splendid chapter on theories and methods. Finally, W. A. Giljarowski gives a detailed account of Pavlovian Theories and their application to Russian Psychiatry.
An authors’ and general index are provided. This is a most useful source book.


The author presents his impressions, based on 15 years of clinical experience, of the human problems involved in the treatment of older patients within a psychiatric clinic.

Practical problems, from the moment of entry into the clinic to the release or death of the old patient, are discussed with concrete examples. Emphasis is laid on the dangers of the first night in the clinic; the patient’s first impressions are of decisive importance and doctors and nurses must avoid arousing suspicion and mistrust. The author finds the modern aversion to the observation ward to be unjustified, since it represents the only safe solution for confusional states.

Examples are given of elderly chronic schizophrenics, whose astonishing energy and productivity could be used in giving tasks of responsibility within the clinic, with the most encouraging results. Hobbies have great importance, such as stamp collecting, handwork, painting, etc., and they offer the best guarantee against relapses. It is of immense importance to find for each patient some activity in which he can experience success; and occupational therapy is recognised as an important weapon against de-pressional states. The author has found by experience that it is a warm and friendly atmosphere which has the greatest therapeutic action. A strong plea is made for more psychotherapy for the old patient; the doctor’s aim should be to make life bearable and guide the old man towards a stoical acceptance of old age. An interesting theory is given, on the grounds of empirical observation of old patients, that in old age the self-destructive instinct, being no longer balanced by the sexual instinct, is not a perversion but a natural provision for the necessary acceptance of the fact of individual death.

For the success or otherwise of the return of the patient to his relatives, the decisive factor is the emotional atmosphere: in fact whether or not he feels wanted in the home. The author is to be thanked for this very wise and human contribution to the understanding of the older psychiatric patient.


This book contains papers read at a conference on Medical and Surgical Aspects of the Ageing, by the Glasgow Post-graduate Medical Board in 1963. It contains a number of varied and interesting articles grouped broadly under five headings, Epidemiology and Gerontology, Gererebrovascular Disease, Urology in the Elderly, Psychiatry and Clinical Topics. Much of what is written has already been published, but for those of us unable to read extensively in the literature of diseases of the old, these collective papers present current theory and practice presented by experts in their respective fields. Particularly recommended is the section on psychiatry which outlines clinical aspects of depression, paranoia and dementia and discusses the general diagnosis and treatment of mental disease in late life. The book is well printed with clear diagrams and drawings and sensibly bound. It contains many references for those interested in further reading and would be a most valuable addition to the book shelves of anyone seriously interested in Geriatrics.

From time to time one sees in Geriatric longstay wards dwarfs with osteoporosis, cataracts and mental deficiency who, even on close laboratory investigation are difficult to diagnose and classify.

Here Dr. Schwarz’ book may be of use. He has surveyed the world literature on Pseudohypoparathyreoidism and Pseudo-Pseudohypoparathyreoidism. These names associated with the pioneer investigations of Albright and his co-workers are now little used – a better description would be “hereditary brachymetacarpal dwarfism” which stresses some of the more striking features of the condition. It underlines the unity of

Pseudohypoparathyreoidism and Pseudo-Pseudohypoparathyreoidism and stresses the importance of skeletal diminution regardless of the mineral content of the serum. These diseases are hereditary with varying penetrance of the genetic defect which appears to be localized on the X chromosome. Women are twice as often affected as men.

The clinical picture of Pseudohypoparathyreoidism and Pseudo-Pseudohypoparathyreoidism is identical: shortening of the metacarpal bones, a round face, mental deficiency, often calcification of soft tissues, exostosis and cataract formation.

The author discusses in detail the relation of “parathormone resistance of the target organs” in this condition without being able to decide whether parathormone itself plays a decisive role in the development of the condition. This part of the book is the least valuable since the author gets bogged down in a maze of theories.

There is no cure for this disease and symptomatic treatment for the relief of tetany and epilepsy follows conventional lines. In younger persons the prevention of cataract formation and of calcification of basal ganglia can be attempted by treatment with Benecide. Following on the general discussion there is a full description of the author’s own cases.

References to the world literature are complete up to 1962. The book is very adequately produced and can be recommended as a standard work on one of the more obscure skeletal disorders.

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