

THE
BRITISH ENCYCLOPAEDIA
OF
MEDICAL PRACTICE

MEDICAL PROGRESS

1957

THE
**BRITISH ENCYCLOPAEDIA
OF MEDICAL PRACTICE**

INCLUDING
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**MEDICAL PROGRESS
1957**

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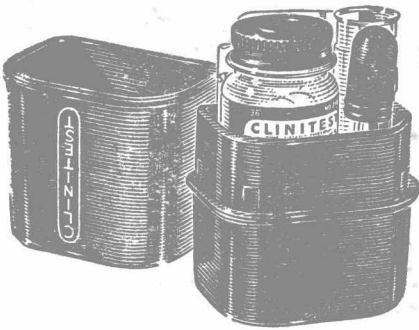
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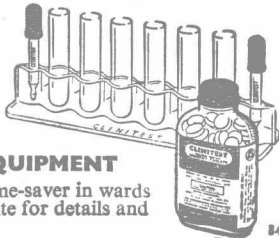
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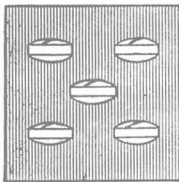
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FOREWORD

THIS year's *Medical Progress* records no epoch-making discoveries, but there have been major advances in the diagnosis, prophylaxis and treatment of disease.

Amongst the current problems in medicine to which Professor Smart refers are coronary occlusion and its relation to diet, smoking and sex; the effects of cigarette smoking and atmospheric pollution on the genesis of lung cancer; the value of vaccines in whooping cough and cortisone in asthma. He describes also recent advances in our knowledge of hypercalcaemia, sarcoidosis, thyroid disease, and the effects on bodily function of aldosterone and 5-hydroxytryptamine.

Mr. Harold Edwards has concentrated not on dramatic advances in techniques such as those of the surgery of the heart and blood vessels, but on the contributions of medical science to surgery. He instances the uses and hazards of cortisone and ACTH in surgery, the contribution of hypothermia, and the modern approach to the management of thyrotoxicosis, peptic ulcer, colonic disease, varicose veins and a variety of common afflictions, but he gives also the latest information about many rarer lesions—for example, Hirschsprung's disease, carcinoid tumours, Peutz-Jegher's syndrome.

Antenatal care, endometriosis and stress incontinence are topics to which Dr. Bender pays particular attention, and amongst the current obstetrical problems with which he also deals are anaesthesia and analgesia, puerperal sepsis arising from the baby's umbilicus, haemolytic disease of the newborn, and marriage guidance.

In addition to these informative and critical reviews of progress in the major subjects, this year's volume is noteworthy for authoritative articles in several special fields in which exciting developments are taking place.

Dr. Denis Hill describes how the problems of the epileptic are being successfully explored by the use of special methods of radiology and electroencephalography, and how behaviour disorders may be related to organic cerebral disease and alleviated by its eradication. He discusses the social problems of epilepsy and the need for wider recognition that in the vast majority of its victims the stigma they bear is unwarranted; indeed, with proper guidance and medical treatment most epileptics can take their normal place in the community.

Our forefathers recognized that "diathesis" and "constitution" played a part in the genesis of disease, but where they were often beguiled by words, the modern geneticist has provided a physical basis for these notions. Dr. Clarke's review of medical genetics (with a valuable glossary of genetic terms) shows how important is the "soil" in disease, although it is only one factor in the "pattern of causes". His comments on the genetic effects of radiation are of immense topical import.

The advances in our knowledge of vitamins during the past decade make especially welcome the comprehensive monograph of Dr. Leslie J. Harris. It is not a supplement to previous publications but a complete and critical survey of existing knowledge and its application to the nutritional problems both of the individual and the community, and to medical treatment.

In their survey of recent work in rheumatology Drs. Copeman and Savage

assess the present position of cortisone and the newer steroids in rheumatoid arthritis and gout. They draw attention to the important contributions which epidemiological investigations are making to this field and the need for more basic research on connective tissue structure and metabolism.

The joint authorship of the article on malignant disease reflects the fruitful association of the surgeon and radiotherapist in practice, when each patient is seen by both in consultation and an agreed decision on treatment is taken. Cancer remains a mystery, but some of the obscurity is being penetrated by experimental carcinogenesis; epidemiological, ecological and genetic studies; and hormonal influences on tissue growth. More accurate and prolonged studies of its natural history in different sites have made possible its "control" over a wider field. Sir Stanford Cade and Professor Windeyer stress how other specialities contribute to the control of cancer; for example, how the field of surgical extirpation has widened with our knowledge of blood chemistry, blood transfusion, the control of infection by antibiotics, and the improvement in methods of anaesthesia—a pertinent lesson in the interdependence of medical disciplines. They detail the advantages and limitations of the new methods of supervoltage therapy, and describe the field of usefulness of teletherapy using Cobalt⁶⁰ and Caesium¹³⁷ sources. Their review of chemotherapy and hormonal influences derives its authority from an extensive personal experience.

Dr. Adams' contribution is especially welcome because in these days of rapid transport and a greater volume of travel the practitioner in Great Britain is more likely to be called upon to recognize and treat many "tropical" diseases; on these Dr. Adams gives the latest views.

Special interest has been shown in recent years in the cardiovascular lesions of childhood and their alleviation by surgery. Professor John D. Hay (the son of one of the most distinguished pioneers in modern cardiology) contributes a most valuable survey of the present-day approach to the diagnosis of congenital lesions and the indications for surgery. He reports also recent advances in the prevention and treatment of rheumatic heart disease.

Dr. Brookfield's review of recent developments in pharmacology and therapeutics deals with all the main additions to our armamentarium. These include the newer antibiotics—novobiocin, spiramycin, oleandomycin, vancomycin and nystatin; the hypoglycaemic sulphonamides; tranquilizers; anticonvulsants; and hypotensive agents. His critical assessment of their value, and their dangers and shortcomings, holds a just balance between unbridled therapeutic enthusiasm, conservatism, and nihilism.

One new feature of this year's *Medical Progress* is that in bibliographies and references, titles are given in full in the hope that this will indicate more precisely to the reader the relevant literature which he may wish to consult for further information.

October, 1957

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