

SEBRELL, W. H.: *Developing modern nutrition programs*. Public Health Reports, 69, 3, Mar. 1954, 277-283.

Modern nutrition programs promise a new era in public health. In most countries of the Western Hemisphere, including the U.S.A., malnutrition still is present. The use of vitamins has caused great improvement in morbidity from pellagra, beriberi, protein edema, macrocytic anemias and goiter. Kwashiorkor is a serious problem in some areas of the world, and in certain regions phrynodema and ocular lesions prevail. Nutritional surveys still are very important, particularly in Latin America where diets frequently are inadequate in calories, and in vitamin A, riboflavine, and calcium. In Puerto Rico, two-thirds of the population subsist on diets clearly inadequate in some or all essentials. In regions raising chiefly non-food, commercial crops, education may be required for the introduction of even milk or yeast. In the U.S.A., obesity is our major nutritional problem and the use of appetite-depressants does not alter the deleterious dietary pattern. Pellagra is almost wiped out in the United States. Progress is being made in the fight against beriberi in the Philippines. Every nation today faces many needs relative to nutrition. Enrichment of bread and wheat flour is important. Governmental supervision is indispensable and education of the public very urgent.

MILLIS, J.: *The influence of nutrition on the growth rate in the first year of life of Chinese infants born in Singapore in 1951*. M. J. Australia, Feb. 27, 1954, 322-327.

57 male and 46 female "full-term, normal" Chinese infants of the lower income groups were studied throughout the first year of life. Breast feeding produced more rapid weight gain for the first 24 weeks than artificial feeding. The infants who were breast fed longer tended to be graded higher in the medical examination at the end of one year. Prior to the fifth month, such illnesses as occurred were chiefly in the artificially fed infants, but after the fifth month the morbidity increased rapidly. Most of the infants' diets were deficient in ascorbic acid, although no clinical signs appeared. At the end of a year, 31 percent of the infants had less than one pint of milk daily and were on diets deficient in high-grade protein, calcium, ascorbic acid and riboflavine.

COHEN, B. M.: *Diabetes mellitus among Indians of the American Southwest: Its prevalence and clinical characteristics in a hospitalized population*. Ann. Int. Med., 40, 3, March 1954, 588-599.

In two years in the hospital facilities of the Phoenix area of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, out of 16,296 consecutive admissions, there were 256 Indian diabetic admissions, an over-all case-admission rate of 1.5 per cent for the entire area. Diabetic coma did not occur. Obesity was common, the majority of patients presenting the "maturity-onset" type of diabetes. Diabetes increased in tuberculous patients. The prevalence of diabetes in this homogeneous group of Indians of the American Southwest lends strong support to Joslin's thesis of the universality of diabetes.

EDITORIALS

VEGETARIANISM

The writer of this editorial, presumably like most physicians, has always had an ill-defined contempt for vegetarianism. As some English physician expressed it, vegetarians are "full of self-righteousness and wind." However prejudiced one may be against an all-vegetable, or a lacto-ovo-vegetable diet, it appears that in all respects except weight, these people are the equals of their meat-eating friends. The recent report by Hardinge and Stare (1) indicated that blood proteins and blood counts were at just as good a level in non-meat-eaters as in those who enjoy cooked flesh of animals. In the case of "pure" vegetarians in their youth, the average intake fell a little short of the amounts recommended by The National Research Council. The pure vegetarians averaged 20 pounds less in weight than non-vegetarians. Further studies no doubt may deal with blood lipids and with resistance to infection in the two groups.

I know from experience that a vegetarian, for obvious reasons, is a very difficult person to entertain in one's home. As a matter of fact, a vegetarian ought never to permit himself to be a house guest anywhere. From experience, also, I have found in all the vegetarians I have met only two reasons for their restriction. The commonest reason is a semi-religious one.

The other is merely that they do not *like* meat. I have very few vegetarians as patients but cannot decide whether this is due to the fact that they form a distinctly minority group or whether they are less prone to illness. Some time I would enjoy meeting a person who refrained from meat not because he did not like meat, and not because of some religious interdiction, but because he thought a vegetable or plant diet was better for him.

In the distant future we expect that, owing to dwindling meat supplies, populations will be forced to subsist largely on cereals, fruits and vegetables. It is comforting to know that, in some respects at least, such a diet will not prove harmful.

1. Hardinge, M. G. and Stare, F. J.: Nutritional studies of vegetarians. J. Clin. Nut., 2, 2, 1954.

MEDICINE AND THE LAY PRESS

Actually there is no good solution to the several problems arising from the lay reporting of medical news. One of the problems is that, with the exception of a very few "professional" writers, a somewhat distorted version of any given matter results. Seldom is this distortion due to misquotation of facts. It is due rather to the fact that the popular style of writing

fails to make distinctions which, however slight they may seem in themselves, cast an inaccurate character over the whole report. Not only so, but there is often introduced an almost emotional factor which certainly has no place in medical reporting. The net result is that patients, who, more and more, enjoy a "medical education," present themselves to the physician with preconceived ideas which render the task of diagnosis and treatment not only difficult but often quite distasteful.

It has been suggested in Switzerland that medical progress should not be called to the public's attention

by the press but should be the subject of an official statement by the profession in order to eliminate "sensationalism." In the U.S.A., at least, there is no way to prevent lay reporting. For several years past, medicine has been "big news" and the public likes it. Time alone will smooth out the situation. The press will continue to use increasing caution with respect to the background of their professional medical writers. Finally, it is only fair to say that the writings of many of these professionals is much better and more accurate than some of the medical columns written by physicians.

BOOK REVIEWS

AN INTRODUCTION TO BACTERIAL PHYSIOLOGY. Evelyn L. Oginsky and Wayne W. Umbreit, W. H. Freeman & Company, San Francisco, California. 1954. \$7.25.

The authors, who are associated with the Merck Institute for Therapeutic Research, unfold the inner workings of bacteria. Although the book is "technical" so far as the average physician is concerned, it is nevertheless very interesting. As in animal physiology, so in bacterial physiology, the essentials are expressed in chemical reactions, often of a complicated nature. Perhaps the one problem is no more difficult than the other.

RADIOLOGIE CLINIQUE DE L'INTESTIN GRÊLE DE L'ADULTE ET DE L'ENFANT. P. Porcher, P. Buffard and J. Sauvegrain. Masson et Cie, Paris. 5000 fr., 1954.

This volume of 614 pages with 350 figures (mostly x-ray reproductions) admirably exposes the many difficulties encountered in the examination of the small intestine. Various techniques are adequately described, and the abnormal appearances in various diseases and disorders are illustrated. Great emphasis is placed upon the examination of the small bowel in children. Thus far we have not had the pleasure of reading so complete a treatise on this subject of growing importance. The x-ray reproductions are particularly informative.

HANDBOOK FOR DIABETIC CHILDREN. Alfred E. Fische, M.D. and Dorothea L. Horstmann. Intercontinental Medical Book Corp., New York. 1954. \$1.75.

The present volume is extremely satisfactory not only because it covers all that any patient with diabetes needs to know, but more particularly because it is written in simple language that children can understand. This is the only diabetic manual which we have seen that incorporates the latter feature.

THE MEANING OF SOCIAL MEDICINE. Iago Galston, M.D. Harvard University Press, June 1, 1954. \$2.75. (Published for the Commonwealth Fund.)

The reviewer has had the pleasure of talking with several professional persons with medical degrees who were enthusiastic about "social medicine," which, of course, must be distinguished from socialized medicine. Social medicine puts the emphasis on positive health, well-being, radiancy, buoyancy, etc., and naturally embraces a reasonable amount of psychology. The idea is not only to diagnose a disease and treat it intelligently, but to go further into the habits and associations of the patient, in order that he or she may, through practice, experience the more abundant life, physically, mentally, philosophically and even spiritually.

Galston's book is an able description of what social medicine might become and deserves careful reading. He feels that while present therapeutic medicine cannot engulf social medicine, the converse is not true. It all amounts to a widened definition of medicine and medical education, difficult as it may prove in practice. The enthusiasm of the "positive health" proponents is fairly contagious and after talking with them one feels that something very big has been contacted. Next day, however, it is quite obvious that what patients desire of us physicians is comfort and an end of suffering, and that in itself is an assignment. It is almost questionable if the medical profession ever could grasp the enthusiasm propounded. Furthermore, isn't positive health emphasis almost a specialty? Or is it something to be taken up by others, rather than by physicians?

VITAMIN B_{12} . SELECTED ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY, 1954. Merck & Co., Inc., Rahway, N. J.

For those who are interested in the hemopoietic, growth and other potentialities of vitamin B_{12} , this 245 page book is extremely valuable, inasmuch as the whole literature of the subject is reviewed up to the present moment.