BOOK REVIEWS

Ministry of Education: Publications.

The Ministry of Health is the fons et origo of many a pronouncement regarded by paediatricians, but our older patients are also affected by the Ministry of Education. Among its publications which deserve notice are the following:

Memorandum on the Closure of Schools and Exclusion from School on Account of Infectious Illness. (Pp. 20. Is. 3d.) London: H.M.S.O. 1956. (Issued jointly with the Ministry of Health.)

This memorandum was first issued in 1909, and last in 1942. The new edition brings us up to date in the subject, which is concisely indicated in its title, and does not pretend to be a textbook of communicable diseases.


This interesting booklet reviews recent work in 'the small but important section concerned with the education of handicapped pupils' which followed the Education Act of 1944. Its anonymous author is evidently conscious of history and of current social progress as a continuum.

The Education of Patients in Hospital. Circular 312 (11th September, 1956), circulated to local education authorities, and as an appendix to Ministry of Health Memorandum 'Education in Hospitals', H.M.(56) 81 which is circulated to Regional Hospital Boards, Hospital Management Committees and Boards of Governors of Teaching Hospitals.

These memoranda summarize the regulations governing the schooling of children in hospital, and go somewhat further. It is encouraging to note that in a hospital school 'even short-stay patients should be admitted to its roll' (actually some hospital schools exist now in general children's hospitals or wards in which most of the children are short-stay patients), and that the need to stagger teachers' holidays or engage extra staff during school holidays is recognized; discouraging to find no mention of nursery school teachers; 'Where there is a number of children under seven it may be an advantage to employ a helper to assist the teacher'.


This small volume could be read with profit by mothers as well as nurses, medical students and practitioners. Infant welfare officers will find in it a great deal of helpful information. It strikes the happy mean between the rigid schedules of 25 years ago and the loose demands of the moderns. There is a little irritating repetition and the case reports are made to sound synthetic.

The book is full of common sense, which is the root on which all infant care should be grafted, and it contains a great deal of practical value. Dr. James is to be congratulated and the book deserves success.


This monograph reviews the literature of haemolytic disease of the newborn with particular reference to the part played in antigen antibody reaction and exchange by the placenta. The main objective was to determine if blood group substances, apart from those of the red blood cells, played any part in sensitisation of the mother. A series of absorption experiments using agglutinating and conglutinating Rhesus antisera is presented in which negative results suggested that the placenta is not a source of blood group substances. Some apparent absorption of antibody with reduction of agglutinating serum titre was ascribed to non-specific absorption by such substances as lecithin and cholesterin. A short discussion of the serological findings together with some histological observations ends inconclusively.


This is a disappointing book. The production is not up to the usual standard of the publishers and from the first chapter the diagrams are confusing because dark heavy lines are not dark enough, due perhaps to the poor quality of the paper. It contains too much about detailed hospital treatment for the family doctor, and yet, if he looks for up-to-date information about immunisation, he will find no discussion of the mass trials of the U.S.A., and the brief mention of quarantine measures is frankly misleading. Is father to stay home from work for three weeks? What exactly is mother to do about the shopping? It looks as if Dr. Agerholm is trying to imply the blessing of the Ministry of Health for her published views. For those called upon to treat poliomyelitis in hospital there is more that is valuable although the repeated reference to infectivity is overdone. The practical contributions of the Oxford school to respiratory difficulties are well described although line drawings of circuits would have been better than indifferent photographs of apparatus. Fig. 18, for example, is too complicated to help at all. The section on early diagnosis is the best part of the book. There is no table of contents.

In the review of Child Behaviour by Frances L. Ilg and Louise Bates Ames, in the December, 1956, issue (Arch. Dis. Childh., 31, 534), it was erroneously said that the Gesell Institute of Child Development was at Yale University.