emphasized. The truth is generally less terrible than the patient's own fantasies. It was in this sphere of the literature that the reviewers found theory the most abundant and data the least.

Reviews of the published material with their strings of authors and dates, lengthening sentences and baulking the train of thought are apt to be tiresome reading. The repeated mention of authors also imposes a restriction on the form of sentences. However, the reader must just slog through it if he is to get to the reward at the end of each chapter in the form of the commentary, where he will find food for thought in a very compact form. One could not really expect any levity in a book of this kind, and it is rather stiff going all through, but one sentence seems to have escaped into the realm of humour 'Tessner et al. (1952) noted that flowered rompers are upsetting to boys because their masculinity is threatened.'

A question that is constantly raised or at least is present in the minds of parents and hospital workers alike, is whether long-term harm comes from the psychological upset of a short-term hospital experience. The question is dismissed by some as unanswerable but it haunts others. Scattered anecdotal evidence provides only a partial answer. Studies that relate adult psychological difficulties to childhood illness, hospitalization, or separation and those that are basically psychosomatic were excluded from the review. However, the question is really irrelevant to reforms in the care of the sick child, many of which are now in progress, for these are mainly dictated by the necessity to diminish immediate suffering and short-term disturbance, which is a big enough problem.

All who deal with sick children in any way know that there is a great amount of psychological reaction to hospitalization, the determinants of which are often obscure. But there is no smoke without a fire and a review of this size should point to where the fire is. Yet one is left with the impression that there are so many determinants of upset, so many fires, that a simple plan of action to extinguish them is impossible. There remains, however, an enormous amount of smoke and it is only the wide application of commonsense and humane thinking (as for instance advocated in the Platt report on the Welfare of Children in Hospital, which is much quoted in the review) that will diminish it.

The great difficulty of research in this field, due to the multiplicity of factors operating and many possible explanations of results, is emphasized repeatedly in this review. For all that, a great deal has been demonstrated in the past 25 years by research workers in this complicated field, and a bibliography of this comprehensiveness was much needed. Drs. Vernon, Foley, Sipowicz, and Schulman must be congratulated on having undertaken this formidable task and on the usefulness of the book they have produced.


This collection of papers is published on behalf of the Society for Autistic Children. It forms a most valuable introduction to the problems facing those who are concerned for the welfare of these children, whether they be doctors, teachers, or social workers. An account is given of the clinical features of childhood psychosis, and stress is rightly laid on the need for the early diagnosis of the non-communicating child. There is a description of some of the pioneering work which is being carried out in the education of this group of handicapped children, the number of whom may be more than has been previously recognized, and for whom there has been inadequate provision. These papers on the clinical methods, methods of observation, differential diagnosis, and management of the autistic child can be warmly recommended.


The authors review the effects of a large number of drugs which are said to modify the behaviour of patients who suffer from cerebral palsy, or modify their symptoms by diminishing involuntary movement or lessening spasticity. Their patients were severely physically and mentally handicapped children and adults aged from 6 weeks to 60 years whose average mental age was 18 months. 65% were epileptic and the majority suffered from "some type of spasticity"—(though it is a little difficult to know what the authors mean by 'spasticity', for in chapter 1 one reads "the 'spastic' state encompasses the wide range of symptomatology from uncontrolled generalized overactivity to the immobility due to extensive contractures").

The first two chapters review the neurophysiology of disorders of muscle tone but are almost impossible to read because of the style in which they are written. For example, it is difficult to make sense of the following sentences; "Abnormal posture develops gradually: 'relative' in the early stage it ultimately becomes 'fixed'. Denny-Brown uses the term 'relative dystonia' synonymously with plastic rigidity, i.e. the resistance to passive stretch is moderately yielding, with the limb remaining in the position to which it is stretched. As the dystonia increases, more and more motor units resist passive stretch of the muscle until in fully developed dystonia the plastic quality disappears and 'there is no adjustment to the change of posture; the resistance to passive movement is springy in quality and the limb flies back to its previous posture when released'. This process is reflected in the electromyogram of the corresponding muscles as 'some units consistently fail to drop out with increasing stretch'." These chapters are accompanied by diagrams which are either extremely difficult to follow or so badly drawn that they are meaningless.