Book reviews

Asian Patients in Hospital and at Home. By Alix Henley. (Pp. 188; illustrated + tables. £5.50 hardback.) King Edward's Hospital Fund for London: London. 1979.

Few of us can be complacent about the health service we provide for Asians: the lack of trained interpreters, the lack of appropriate food in hospitals, and the lack of training—of clerical workers to deal with their names, and of nurses and doctors to provide appropriate help. The past record is one of rudeness and thoughtlessness. The prospects are not bright; even medical schools in those cities with large Asian communities rarely give specific training about them.

Our inadequacy at understanding and helping them is one of the reasons why Asian patients occupy a disproportionately large number of hospital beds and take up a disproportionately large amount of out-patient clinic time. Alix Henley's new book should help to remove some of our inadequacies. It is an outstandingly useful, well produced, and attractively presented book. Miss Henley is an experienced teacher of English to people from overseas and, like all good teachers, she has learnt much from her pupils. Her work and this book have been supported by the King Edward's Hospital Fund who are to be congratulated on money well spent.

The book begins with an account of the areas from which Asians have come to this country and includes useful sections on their home life, religion, and cultures. There are helpful sections on Asian names, diets, clothes, jewellery, and languages. This is a practical book. By considering the background and beliefs of Asian families she explains the common problems we encounter—such as their noncompliance with doctor's prescribed treatment. She gives detailed advice for the hospital worker as well as for the health visitor or doctor making a home visit that will make the visit both courteous and useful.

This book should be obligatory reading for all doctors and will be particularly appreciated by those who have already experienced their inadequacy with Asian patients. It is the most useful book that I have come across in the last 5 years, and if

Miss Henley will now write in each of the main Asian languages a leaflet that we can give to the parents of Asian children when they are admitted, telling them something about the children's wards, their role, and the child's needs in hospital I promise to send her a large bunch of roses.

ROY MEADOW

The First Year of Life. Psychological and Medical Implications of Early Experience. Edited by David Shaffer and Judy Dunn. (Pp. 221; illustrated + tables. £11.80 hardback.) Wiley: Chichester. 1979.

This book is a collection of essays by a number of the most distinguished and best known research workers in child development and child psychology in the last 10 to 15 years. Each chapter reviews the research and current thought on a particular aspect of early, mainly adverse, experiences in childhood and their outcome.

The subjects covered are, briefly, these: social or responsive behaviour in the first week of life, by M Packer and D Rosenblatt, with a large bibliography of the recent work. Effects on 'development' of medical interventions in labour and separation of babies from mothers after birth: an excellent critique of the counter movements to the so-called 'engineering' approach to childbirth, by Martin Richards with his usual forceful clarity. At least short-term predictions can be made, both good and bad, pointing to necessary changes in staff attitudes and roles in hospitals. Correlations between neuro-behavioural findings in preschool and older children and pre- and perinatal complications, by A F Kalveboer from Groningen. The correlation proves to be weak. An apathetic infant seems to be the one we should be the most concerned about. Continuity beyond infancy of individual differences in babies (that is, not *what* he does, but *how* he does it) is discussed by Judy Dunn. However obvious it seems to us as parents, we are not permitted to think that such continuity can be proved.

Other chapters include psychoanalytical theory, cross cultural perspectives, 'intentional' behaviour in infants (is there such a thing?), the 'ontogeny of human empathy', Down's syndrome—child/mother communication and an interesting study by Fae Hall and others, of the mothering behaviour of women who in childhood experienced disrupted family life, from bereavement, divorce, or separation; mothering which, by certain criteria, is found to be inferior.

Two chapters stand out as particularly readable, perhaps because of the lesser complexity of their arguments and the clarity of their conclusions. One is by Anne M Clarke and A D B Clarke on early adverse experience and its limited effect on later development. 'There is no experience' they say 'from which children have not recovered partly, or wholly, granted some change in their circumstances.' In programmes for alleviation of an early deprivation the circumstances of middle and later childhood must be a major focus. The other paper is by Barbara Tizard, on residential nursery rearing with later restoration to the natural mother or with adopters and assessment at 2, 4, and 8 years. So important is *continuity* of parental care, she concludes, that if it is not possible or if it is truly undesirable to keep a child in his own home, then the only alternative should be adoption. Paediatricians, psychiatrists, and social workers will always have their worries about the prognosis after a stressful infancy. If however one can feel that continuity of further care, plus concern, is a certainty one's pessimism about the outcome of even the worst travesties of nurture turns to optimism; especially if the duration of that stress was short relative to the subsequent care.

Hospitalisation is briefly touched on by several of the authors. It would have enhanced this valuable book if a chapter on the long-term effects of hospitalisation of young children could have been included, particularly in cases where painful stress, anxiety, and separation are cumulative. Our worries are still based too much on anecdote. Could not an author of the same calibre have been found to do this?