His Bundle Electrocardiography

His Bundle Electrocardiography and Clinical Electrophysiology, by Onkar S. Narula, 457 pp, 302 illus, \$35, Philadelphia, Davis, 1975.

The His bundle catheter, in use for only about six years, together with the capillary microelectrode, now provide electrophysiologists with data that not only jar the foundations of traditional electrocardiography but also provide the previously empirical interpretation of normal and abnormal cardiac rhythms with a more solid, scientific base.

This well-edited volume of 20 chapters begins with "Anatomic Basis for Impulse Generation and Atrioventricular Transmission," by Lev and Bharati, and ends with "Prognostic Values in H-V Intervals," by Narula, Gann, and Samet. Sandwiched in between are chapters on His bundle electrocardiography that summarize current uses, interpretations, limitations; anatomy and electrophysiology of cardiac conducting systems; techniques for His bundle recordings and their limitations.

His catheter recordings, previously used mainly for investigative work, are now clinically useful, providing more reliable diagnostic and prognostic information about cardiac arrhythmias and conduction defects. With its help, unnecessary pacemaker implantations may be avoided. For example, symptoms of dizziness or syncope in patients with a normal His bundle conduction profile are less likely to be cardiac in origin. On the other hand, an abnormal His bundle conduction profile suggests a cardiac origin for these symptoms and a pacemaker may benefit the patient.

Despite the author's obvious enthusiasm about this technique, he presents an even-handed viewpoint on reliability, reproducibility, validation, and limitation, to establish a firm basis for the routine and clinical uses of His bundle recordings. Only proper quality control permits the His bundle technique to be used profitably with benefit to the patient.

I concur with Dr Brian F. Hoffman's opinion that "this book will be of value to the clinician as a summary of the state of the art and to the investigator as an indicator of work to be done." It also enables the practitioner to follow the sage advice of Sir Thomas Lewis "to grasp new principles and to be conversant with new knowledge and its influences upon the care of patients afflicted with common maladies."

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Reincarnation

Cases of the Reincarnation Type, vol 1: Ten Cases in India, by Ian Stevenson, 374 pp, \$20, Charlottesville, University Press of Virginia, 1975.

Perhaps most western people have already adopted a position against the concept of reincarnation, just as they have against various other topics that come under the rubric of parapsychology. Dr Stevenson, professor of psychiatry at the University of Virginia, has long been a student of these topics. In regard to reincarnation he has painstakingly and unemotionally collected a detailed series of cases from India, cases in which the evidence is difficult to explain on any other grounds. He presents his corpus of evidence in an interesting way, providing careful detail, and discussing the procedures that he used in attempting to verify the assertions. He provides a critical analysis of the strong and the weak points. Previously he has published 20 instances suggestive of reincarnation and promises that other volumes with additional cases will follow this.

He may not convince skeptics but he has placed on record a large amount of data that cannot be ignored.

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National Health Insurance

National Health Insurance: Can We Learn From Canada?, edited by Spyros Andreopoulos (Sun Valley Forum on National Health, 1974), 273 pp, \$10.95, New York, Wiley & Sons, 1975.

National Health Insurance provides a useful single source of information on the Canadian experience with national health insurance, including its historical development, evaluation of its economic results, and an assessment of its effect on quality of care, supply and distribution of medical professionals, and professional trade unionism.

Many of the issues discussed have particular relevance for the United States. For example, despite national health insurance, the movement of medical care prices, use, and expenditure is similar in the United States and Canada. In Canada, co-payments designed to reduce costs had little effect on utilization or costs. (Some participants believed that the Canadian experience was too limited to permit definite conclusions. I would concur.) Canadian officials have adopted a strategy to limit the future establishment of hospital beds as the best means of cost control. Fee schedules and peer review are relatively ineffective cost control mechanisms in a fee-for-service system because of the difficulty of controlling increases in units of service. Increasing the supply of physicians has not significantly altered their geographic distribution or restrained physician cost increases in Canada.

National health insurance resulted in only modest changes in utilization in Canada and these tended to improve access for the poor and others in greatest need of medical care. I think that there is some contrary evidence in this country from our Medicare experience and other sources. More comprehensive insurance coverage sometimes results in greatest utilization increases for groups that are not necessarily in greatest need of medical care.

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Selected New Books

Obstetrics-Gynecology

Progress in Infertility, edited by S. J. Behrman and Robert W. Kistner, ed 2; 1,042 pp, with illus, Boston, Little, Brown, 1975.

Progress in Gynecology, vol 6, edited by Melvin L. Taymor and Thomas H. Green, Jr, 782 pp, with illus, \$43.50, New York, Grune & Stratton, 1975.

Biology, Physiology

The Biology of Aging, by F. M. Burnet (the Sir Douglas Robb Lectures 1973), 69 pp, 11 illus, paper, \$3, New York, Oxford University Press, 1975.

Biology of Cancer, edited by E. J. Ambrose and F. J. C. Roe, ed 2; 315 pp, with illus, \$45, New York, Wiley, 1975.

Cell Blotogy in Medicine, edited by E. Edward Bittar, 723 pp, with illus, paper, \$17.50, New York, Wiley, 1975.

Basic Radiation Biology, by Donald J. Pizzarello and Richard L. Witcofski, ed 2; 143 pp, with illus, \$11.75, Philadelphia, Lea & Febiger, 1975.

Introduction to Physiology, vol 1 and 2: Basic Mechanisms, by Hugh Davson and M. B. Segal, 561, 481 pp, with illus, \$16.50 each, New York, Grune & Stratton, 1975.

Endocrinology, vol 6: Adrenal Gland, edited by Hermann Blaschko, George Sayers, and A. David Smith (*Handbook of Physiology*, section 7), 742 pp, with illus, Washington, DC, American Physiological Society (Baltimore, Williams & Wilkins distributor), 1975.

Alcohol Intoxication and Withdrawai: Experimental Studies II, edited by Milton M. Gross (symposium, Manchester, England, June 1974), 667 pp, with illus, \$37.50, New York, Plenum, 1975.

The Book Forum