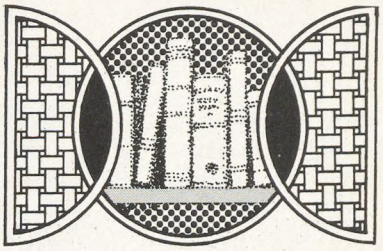
Book Reviews



The Making of the Modern Family. *Edward Shorter. Basic Books, New York, 1977, 368 pp., $5.95.*

Considerable difficulty faces both the individual family physician and the field as a whole in incorporating what is known about families into a discipline upon which to base family practice. The limited knowledge about families is dispersed into history, sociology, psychology, anthropology, and only belatedly, medicine. For those interested in exploring the interdisciplinary field of "family studies," *The Making of the Modern Family* is an excellent start. Edward Shorter, a professor of history at the University of Toronto, serves as a charming, erudite, and humorous guide over the last three centuries of the much-mythologized history of the family.

The book is a scholarly work which addresses the question of how social change transforms people's intimate, day-to-day lives. It has generated surprising controversy, undoubtedly due to its fluency, humor, and originality, all rarities in academic treatises. It is organized around an argument which concerns the changing nature of households and communities, of men's and women's roles, sexuality, romance, mother-infant relations, and the nuclear family itself in Western Europe and America over the last three centuries. Shorter's argument, bastardized here for brevity, contends that the social matrix of lineage, community, and extended family has been loosened, and the nuclear family freed of the bonds of authority, custom, and rationality in favor of free choice, spontaneity, and sexuality. He draws much of his evidence from provincial medical doctors in 18th century France who created a genre of literature called "medical topography," imitated throughout Europe and America; local practitioners described the social lives and environmental hazards of their patients, with all the attendant prejudices of their profession, providing one of the only sources of information on the common peoples of those times. Shorter gathers an impressive assembly of ingenious and creative evidence to support his argument, all carefully and unobtrusively documented in the book's concluding notes and appendices.

The momentum for these already familiar changes came, according to Shorter, from the necessities of market capitalism—individualized consumers, large markets, increased standards of living, and the creation of an industrial labor force. While the argument remains persuasive, these "reasons why" are not documented as those which prove that the changes actually took place. This poses the unaddressed question of how economics still affects the nature of the family today.

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Most useful to my own understanding of families was the concluding chapter on the "post-modern family" and the current changes in the Western family. Shorter's analysis of the "youth culture," definitively "cutting the lines from younger generation to older" and based on those characteristics that supposedly reveal a person's masculinity or femininity, gave me an original understanding of teenage pregnancy and epidemic venereal disease.

The Making of the Modern Family, if it is at moments repetitive, accumulating evidence, remains an enjoyable, enlightening study which begins to place the family in a documented historical context, more complicated and interesting than Norman Rockwell portraits or Grandma's embroidered epigrams. If *family* practice is to become a discipline with a body of knowledge, it logically begins with the nature of families. Forget your history-of-medicine-is-boring prejudice, as this history of the family delights as it provides an insight into where we have come from, where we are, and where we are going.

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Basic Surgery: A Symptom-Oriented Approach. *Bernard Gardner, Hiram C. Polk, Jr, H. Harlan Stone, Winfred L. Sugg (eds). Appleton-Century-Crofts, New York, 1978, 627 pp., $18.75 (paper).*

This softcover book, certainly too large and heavy for the medical student and house officer's white jacket pocket, presents an excellent approach to basic surgical principles.

The organization of this book, mainly a symptom oriented approach, renders it quite readable. The chapter references seem appropriate and the review questions and answers highlighted at the end of each chapter are excellent.

Chapters which seem especially good are those dealing with parenteral fluids/nutrition, acute abdominal pain, burns, low back pain, and a postlogue which gives a good review of basic surgical techniques.

In summary, this book has applicability to clinical year medical students, house officers, practicing physicians; certainly could be recommended for inclusion on the ER bookshelf; and could be recommended for a basic review of surgical principles and techniques.

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Practical Antimicrobial Therapy. *Herbert L. Dupont. Appleton-Century-Crofts, New York, 1978, 172 pp., $8.75 (paper).*

The purpose of this book (manual), as clearly stated by the author in the preface, is to give the clinician general and specific guidelines in the selection of an antibiotic. The author accomplishes this in a very complete, concise, and easily assimilated fashion without wasting space on trivia.

The beginning prepares the clinician for following sections by a discussion of general considerations of chemotherapeutic agents. This includes mechanisms of action, cidal and static drugs, information concerning their actions and their use, and the effects of protein bind-

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ing on drug activity and effectiveness.

This is followed by a section on factors which influence outcome in bacterial infection, such as delay in instituting therapy, extent of infection and nature of organism, appropriateness of antibiotic, site of infection, and surgical intervention.

The proper approach to the infected patient is presented. Although correct bacterial identification and drug sensitivity are not neglected, a great deal of emphasis is placed on empiric antimicrobial therapy because, as the author states, "it is in this setting that most antibiotic orders are written."

The predominant portion of the book is then devoted to infection at various sites of the body and in the various organ systems. This is dealt with in an excellent manner in each instance and includes diagnosis, etiology, antimicrobial of first choice, and an alternative.

The manual concludes with a brief discussion of incomplete clinical response to therapy and, finally, a very good list of references for further reading.

This is a fine manual for the family physician to have at his elbow for instant reference. Every active clinician should possess this information on antimicrobial therapy.

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Drug Information for Patients. *H. Winter Griffith. W. B. Saunders Company, Philadelphia, 1978, 511 pp., $31.00.*

Drug Information for Patients is a comprehensive, clearly written, loose-leaf, hardcover text concerning information that the average patient can understand without difficulty. The format contains concise information on each page concerning most of the drugs prescribed in a primary care setting.

Each drug is discussed on one page. The format is well organized and the information is given as follows:

1. The name of the pharmaceutical company;
2. *Warning* (concerning potential for drug abuse, addiction, or habit formation);
3. *Instructions* (written in a simple, concise style);
4. *Precautions*;
5. *Possible side effects*;
6. *Patients' activities of daily living* (subject matter instructing the patient about necessary precautions in their everyday performance and responsibilities);
7. *Storage*;
8. *Refill information;*
9. *Overdosage* (pertinent information for the layman in treating overdosage of the drugs described).

Since each drug is detailed on one page, it can be removed (loose-leaf binder text). The patient could post the page of information in a conspicuous place near where the medication is kept or stored. The page can be put back into the binder after treatment is completed. All drugs are listed alphabetically.

This text could also be used as a quick reference for the busy practicing family physician. I would recommend "Drug Information for Patients" as a very practical vehicle for the patients' comprehensive understanding of all aspects of the drugs they are exposed to.

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