
A full account of the rise and fall of psychosomatics will constitute one of the more intriguing chapters of post-war medicine. Originally an improbable hybrid of clinical thinking, physiological speculation and psychoanalytical theory, it was fired by the enthusiasm of what one of its more prominent representatives has acknowledged to be 'a reformist movement which emphasized that "patients are persons"'. The exuberant mood of its salad days is emblazoned in the proceedings of the 1949 meeting of the Association for Research in Nervous and Mental Diseases. This book, with a foreword by Professor L. S. Penrose, FRS, is published to coincide with the centenary of St. Lawrence's Hospital, Caterham, England, and all the contributors have been connected with the hospital in the past 10 years.

The editor is eminently suitable to write on modern trends in research as he is also editor of the Journal of Mental Deficiency Research and was editor of the Proceedings of the First Congress of the International Association for the Scientific Study of Mental Deficiency, 1967.

The book is selective in what it includes, and in consequence many subjects are omitted altogether, but what is included is dealt with extensively and authoritatively. Parts have already been published elsewhere.

Each chapter deals with a general review of the topic and then gives some detailed research, sometimes pointing out further lines for continuing study. At the end of each chapter there is an excellent bibliography.

Chapter 1 deals with clinical syndromes in general and in particular with two syndromes where mental deficiency and ichthyosis are associated with (1) spastic diplegia and (2) sexual infantilism, two syndromes where there is mental deficiency and deaf-mutism, with the syndromes of de Lange and Rubinstein-Taybi, and finally where mental deficiency is associated with anophthalmia and microphthalmia.

Chapter 2 deals with mongolism in general, in families and in mosaics.

Chapter 3, by A. T. Rundle, deals with anthropometry in general and a 10-year survey of growth and sexual maturation in detail. Mongols are treated as a separate group.

Chapter 4, by Beate Hermelin and N. O'Connor, and Chapter 5, by P. E. Bryant, give accounts of psychological research into arousal and patterns of learning which could lead to practical application in methods of teaching the subnormal.

Chapter 6, by A. W. Griffiths, on drug trials is accompanied by a useful and extensive Appendix of various trials of tranquillizers and anti-epileptic drugs. It recognizes that behaviour disorders and epilepsy are two of the most common problems encountered in hospitals for the mentally retarded. Three drug trials are described but the use of the trade name for sulphamide seems out of keeping with the rest of the chapter.

In Chapter 7 P. E. Sylvester describes techniques of neuropsychology which do not require highly expensive laboratory equipment and gives findings relating brain weight and numbers of fibres in particular brain areas to results of IQ tests and to patients with epilepsy and cerebral palsy.

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Dr. Richards himself writes the first two chapters and the last one and his style of writing is a delight to read.

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