

cerned rather than an attempt to compress the history of psychiatry in general would have been more appropriate. There are fairly clear descriptions of the methodology of the study, and the authors seem to be aware of many of the difficulties in comparing the two hospitals. The tables are particularly clear and helpful.

The overall results suggest little difference in outcome of treatment at the two hospitals but some of the subsidiary findings are of interest, particularly the attitudes of relatives and patients themselves. The main criticism of this type of study is how far the results can be extended to other hospitals in the area and more particularly to other areas of the country.

The book is not cheap considering the rather limited content and would probably be of interest mainly to those involved in administration and planning rather than the more general reader.

MICHAEL R. BOND

DEPRESSION By Ross Mitchell. (Pp. 112; illustrated; 50p.) Penguin: Harmondsworth. 1975.

This book is one of a series of *Mind Specials* published by Penguin Books. In so doing they are co-operating with MIND—The National Association for Mental Health—a charitable organization concerned with the prevention and treatment of mental illness and handicap. This series of illustrated, inexpensive paperbacks is 'aimed at students, practitioners and non-specialists with a particular interest in each topic'.

Dr Ross Mitchell is to be congratulated on undertaking the difficult but important topic of depression. He deals with a range of mood disturbance, covering not only illness, but also grief and responses to other crises in life, including the menopause and retirement. The problem of depression is viewed from many different perspectives, reflecting various schools of thought. It is not possible to weigh in any balance the aetiological significance of various factors when some are drawn from fields of philosophy or sociology, others from biology, pharmacology, and organic disease. The author manages to convey the complexity of the problem in simple language which allows the reader to appreciate the multifaceted nature of the difficulty.

It is doubtful whether this book would be particularly helpful to a patient suffering from depression, but I am sure that it would be of some help to many of those who live with patients subject to depressive illness. It will be especially useful to those with paramedical interests, but it should not be neglected by medical men who are too busy to read textbooks of psychiatry.

A. M. SHENKIN

YEAR BOOK OF PSYCHIATRY AND APPLIED MENTAL HEALTH 1975 Edited by F. J. Braceland, D. X. Freedman, A. J. Friedhoff, L. C. Kolb, R. S. Lourie, and J. Romano. (Pp. 475; £15.35.) Lloyd-Luke: London. 1975.

This volume carries on the well-known *Yearbook* tradition, now 75 years old. Eminent authorities edit a series of sections, each containing abstracts of papers published up till July 1974 with a linking critical commentary. The book thus attempts to combine the functions of a review journal and an abstracting journal.

This edition has been published with commendable speed and it is well produced. Inevitably the price is high. Is it a price that all psychiatrists should be prepared to pay? The answer is no. It all depends on the psychiatrist's area of interest. Some topics are dealt with extensively and authoritatively, others get very sketchy treatment indeed. There are 34 pages on biochemistry and pharmacology, 48 on pharmacotherapy, but a derisory two and a half pages (involving three papers!) on suicide. The section on child psychiatry is six times as long as that on mental retardation. Can it be that the very short sections represent topics in which the editors are not really interested? Let up hope that the unevenness of coverage will be put right in the next edition. Better to omit topics altogether than to give them such cursory attention.

J. L. GIBBONS

MODERN PERSPECTIVES IN THE PSYCHIATRY OF OLD AGE Edited by John G. Howells. (Pp. 630; illustrated; £10.00.) Churchill Livingstone: Edinburgh. 1975.

This is the 6th volume in the series of *Modern Perspectives in Psychiatry* edited by Howells; it purports to cover 'growing points' in the psychiatry *particular* to old age.

The individual chapters vary widely in their range of appeal and clarity. The chapter on nosology by Professor Sternberg of Moscow was so terse as to be unintelligible, whereas some of the American contributions were so verbose as to be equally incomprehensible. Counter-balancing this, the chapter, 'Facing Death' by Elizabeth Ross (Illinois) was outstanding, and of value to any doctor dealing with the elderly.

The book's main value is to postgraduates studying for the MRCPsych. examination and merits a place in a postgraduate library catering for this group. Its two main flaws for them are the fact that many of the references quoted will not be readily available to those working outside university centres, and the presence of potentially misleading misprints or mistakes—for example,