over their lives yet our response is largely dismissive. One of the pleasures of working with these families is to see how starting treatment revolutionises their entire world.

If you don't believe me, consider how assiduously families fill in poo and wee charts compared to how they fill in blood sugar charts (sounds like a good idea for an audit to me). This book contains a number of useful charts and event recording charts—there are more attractive ones readily available.

Families with children with voiding disorders frequently want to know “Is it all psychological?” as if the mind and body are two entirely separate entities. This book nicely explores the overlap between functional and organic showing that these are conditions of the whole child, meriting a holistic approach.

I might take some issue with the timing of formal psychological support as I often find that making the symptoms go away by physical treatments causes much psychological morbidity to simply evaporate.

Obviously I am allowed a few gripes. Although the book nicely emphasises the importance of history taking, it does not do this in a challenging way. For example, I find that when a soiling child says “I didn't feel it coming or know it was there”, they invariably mean “I didn't want it to come, but I did know that it was there”.

There is no mention of the fact that much soiling occurs because of postponing voiding—because children are too busy watching TV, using computer games or occasionally even indulging in the archaic pastime of normal play.

There are a few too many enemata and not quite enough fibre for my liking, and I don't know any families that could get a child to sit on the toilet the oft-recommended three times a day. The use of laxatives may be a bit proscriptive; I like to aim for a soft, easy, regular stool regardless of the dose required.

This is clearly a book for the connoisseur. It is too detailed to be a general handbook (albeit that it lacks in such basics as how to sit on the toilet properly). My enthusiasm appears not to be infectious so my colleagues largely felt that they would be happy to let me read it and tell them about the “good bits”. Despite what I have said above I think it is jam packed, even impacted, with good bits. It is fantastic to have access to so much information, which is so clearly authoritative but sometimes a bit tricky to navigate.

If you are interested in this area you will cherish this book as a rock, and if you are not hooked yet, then I pity you, but suspect you will not put this on the top of your reading list. I have left it on my desk, and colleagues or trainees—oblivious to their own loss—have, mysteriously, not taken it.

As an afterthought the cover shows a worried girl in bed with a wolf. I will steer clear of Freud, but wonder if the wolf is an allegory for, or the cause of, the poor girl's night-time wetting.

Anthony Cohn

Working for children: the development of the Paediatric Unit at Northwick Park

B Valman. Published by The North West London Hospitals NHS Trust, 2006, pp 144 (hardback). ISBN 0955293502

Working for children encompasses the past, present and future of paediatric services at Northwick Park. It is clearly written by Dr Bernard Valman, who readers of a certain age will recall was a co-editor of the *Archives of Disease in Childhood* with

Professor Sir Roy Meadow. His experience as an editor, which I still greatly appreciate in my “growing up” as a paediatrician, is reflected within this impressive book.

He frankly recounts the challenges and rewards of multiagency cooperation and describes the challenge of setting up and maintaining a paediatric unit in a non-traditional University teaching hospital. It is a book which I believe should be read by anyone interested in the practicalities of trying to set up and run services.

As a district general hospital with a Clinical Research Centre, the Paediatric Unit at Northwick Park at its foundation in 1969 was a unique institution. What an opportunity—and, with hindsight, we can now appreciate how fully this was taken by its paediatric staff, given the list of eminent alumni who passed through its wards and who were clearly positively influenced by the academic unit's policy of curiosity and rigorous scientific enquiry.

The list of publications and major research projects demonstrates that this was not an academic centre, a claim which can seem to be too commonplace nowadays where some centre's members profess areas of interest but within them are conspicuously light in terms of research publications and presentations.

We grieve on reading of the short-sighted decision to close down this Clinical Research Centre and share the author's anger when he relates how there was no discussion with the paediatric department who were presented with this fait accompli.

The Paediatric Unit was however made of sterner stuff. It picked itself up and as the book relates, has moved triumphantly on and is still conducting research. From the 1990s Northwick Park became associated with St Mary's Hospital, London and received significant investment in medical education and the appointment of a senior lecturer.

As the founding consultants retire we are reassured that with the present consultants, affectionately termed the “Young Turks”, the department is in safe hands.

The lesson for us is that in spite of setbacks, the department has continued to grow and develop new and relevant paediatric services.

This book is a manual on how a department survives, thrives and ultimately triumphs against considerable adversity

There are also little gems within the book such as the correspondence between Donald Court (of the Court report) and the author himself, which alone are worthy of a review. From the comments that “it is amazing what a revelation ‘social paediatrics’ is to the cellular paediatrician” of July 1980 to an extremely candid report of February 1984, summarising how a children's department “plainly carrying an excessive load” yet so underresourced that “the equipment of your special care baby unit is now almost totally dependent on voluntary sources of money”, still managed to show its mettle. How the Northwick Park department moves forward to protect what it has and to lay the groundwork for successful commencement of innovative services in the future are templates that I believe will continue to be of relevance for those responsible for these services.

The back cover statement that “the successes and failures experienced during this process will be of interest to all those who wish to improve the care of children and their families” succinctly emphasises what I see as its true strength.

It doesn't say it, but I believe this book is a manual on how a department survives, thrives and ultimately triumphs against considerable adversity. It emphasises how paediatricians need to seek management positions within their employing Trusts in order to ensure that children's services are represented, how they must network and advocate effectively, and lastly that they must willingly accept independent reports and recommendations to keep the service moving forward. For this reason alone, as a sort of paediatric “What is to be done”, I would recommend this book.

Reading this book inspires us to look at our own departments and to see what more we can learn to improve the lot of our local children and their families.

The late twentieth century will be seen as a time when important interventional governmental policies, several controversial and major reports, the establishment of the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, the National Service Framework and the appointment of Children's Commissioners were decisive and positive factors in the management of children. This book will play an important role for future historians in viewing these events.

Finally I hope that other readers of this book will be inspired to record their department's histories, so that the available source material of future medical and social historians will not, apart from Northwick Park, be restricted solely to that from considerably richer and more influential university teaching hospitals.

A N Williams

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