

A specialty has evolved uncertain of its identity, its purpose and its relationships with other health professionals. Acheson attempted to redefine the role and training of public health doctors but their role and identity has again been blurred in the subsequent on-rush of structural changes in the NHS and Department of Health.

Sheard and Donaldson in their preface note, 'there is no history, only histories'. Their account of the role of the CMO is 'a history' from one perspective and therefore inherently partial. This means that while their work will be of interest to many, it also requires it to be read critically.

RICHARD HIMSWORTH

Former Director of the Institute of Public Health
University of Cambridge

References

- 1 Newsholme A. *The last thirty years in public health. Recollections and reflections on my official and post-official life*. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1936:49.
- 2 Brock L. Correspondence to V Markham. In: Markham V. *Friendship's harvest*. London: Max Reinhardt, 1956:200.
- 3 Ministry of Health. *Consultative council on medical and allied services. Interim report on future provision of medical and allied services*. Cmd 693. London: HMSO, 1920.
- 4 Pater JE. *The making of the National Health Service*. London: King Edward's Hospital Fund for London, 1981:10.
- 5 Briggs A. *A history of the Royal College of Physicians of London*, Volume IV. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- 6 House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology. *Priorities in medical research. Supplementary report*. HL Paper (51). London: HMSO, 1990.

Stutter's casebook. A junior hospital doctor 1839–1841.

Edited by EE Cockayne and NJ Stow. *Suffolk Records Society, Vol 48*. Boydell Press, Woodbridge 2005. 224pp. £35.

During the past half century, the study of history has been greatly expanded. Instead of the ponderous constitutional histories of the past, or the detailed analytical history of followers of Sir Lewis Namier, modern historians have concentrated on social history and subjects such as local and oral history have come to be seen as important. George Rude's study of the crowd in the French Revolution, for example, was a social history that concentrated on the *sans-culottes* who actually stormed the Bastille rather than on the great men of history such as Robespierre, Jean-Paul Marat or the Marquis de Lafayette. There has also been an increasing number of studies of local areas, Ronald Blythe's study of a Suffolk village, *Akenfield*, being perhaps the best known contemporary example of this genre. It is a remarkable evocation of rural change. As in *Akenfield*, oral history has made an important contribution to the work of local historians.

Suffolk, however, is making a contribution to the study of local history whose importance goes far beyond Akenfield. The Suffolk Records Society, based in the Suffolk Record Office in Bury St Edmunds, has taken upon itself the task of making available in print selected examples of the county's manuscript records, 'for the use of scholars and amateur historians all over the world'. It is to their great credit that to date they have published 48 volumes. Volume 47, pub-

lished in 2004, contained the maps and roadbooks of the Kirby family and includes rare large-scale Suffolk maps of the early 18th century. Volume 49, to be published in July 2006, will present 83 documents relating to the Suffolk family of Sir Thomas (later Viscount) Savage. Volume 48, the subject of this review, moves into the world of medicine and presents for the medical historian the case book of a young Suffolk doctor between the years 1839 and 1841.

WG Stutter (1815–87) was for much of his life a respected general medical practitioner in the Suffolk village of Wickhambrook. His casebook, along with other documents, was discovered in the 1970s in the attic of the house where he lived. It lists the patients and the treatment they received during the two years when Stutter was the house surgeon and apothecary at the Suffolk General Hospital, Bury St Edmunds. There are records of 77 admissions. Little is said of diagnosis and the most significant information is the treatment given. The prescriptions are mostly in Latin and the measures given in minims, scruples and so on. The customary use of purgatives and of bleeding, whether by venesection or by leeches, is well described. Many of the patients were young and tuberculosis was frequent. The material, however, is a useful account, given verbatim, of therapy in a country hospital in the early 19th century.

The book does not, however, limit itself to the publication of original documents. The editors have also provided an excellent introduction dealing with medicine and its practitioners in Suffolk in Stutter's time. In addition, there is a pharmaceutical introduction describing the therapies of the time as well as detailing the now incomprehensible symbols used to describe minims, drachmas and ounces, and the ways in which prescriptions were written. There are five appendices: the biographies of doctors listed in the work, the diagnoses of the patients whose records are given, a description of the diseases they suffered from, as well as the physical treatments and the drugs and chemicals that were inflicted upon them.

For so long, medical history has dealt with the heroic doctors of the past, usually working in the great hospitals and rarely, like James McKenzie, working in provincial practice or in rural England. Increasingly, however, the medicine of the *sans-culottes* of the provinces is attracting the attention of contemporary historians, as in Steven King's recent account of medicine and society in Lancashire between 1760 and 1830.

There is so much to be learnt. How many other doctors' diaries, records or casebooks are gathering dust in country attics? How much more can we learn of the life of the patient rather than his medical attendant? The Suffolk Records Society is to be congratulated on their efforts; as are the editors of this useful casebook.

SIR CHRISTOPHER BOOTH

Wellcome Centre for the History of Medicine, UCL

The AIDS pandemic: impact on science and society

Edited by Kenneth H Mayer and HF Pizer. Elsevier Academic Press, San Diego, CA 2005. 520pp. £52.99.

I can do no better than to use the same quote given in the preface to this excellent book taken from *The plague*, part V by Albert Camus: