Book reviews

W.H.O. Expert Committee on Medical Rehabilitation. Second Report. (Pp. 23; 4s.) World Health Organisation Technical Report Series, No. 419. Geneva: W.H.O. 1969.

The previous expert committee on medical rehabilitation met in 1958 and confined its report to general principles. The present paper begins with definitions distinguishing between rehabilitation, medical rehabilitation, social rehabilitation, vocational rehabilitation, handicapped persons, impairment, disability, and invalidity. It also defines certain essential adjuncts to medical rehabilitation such as physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and vocational counselling.

Among the more important points made in the report are the need for legislation and an administrative structure to co-ordinate all the rehabilitation services with the various appropriate social services. National Advisory Boards for the rehabilitation of the disabled are considered valuable both in the planning phase of rehabilitation services and in spreading interest in and knowledge of rehabilitation through all levels of the populace. Although this type of structure exists in Britain under either the National Health Service Acts or the Disabled Persons Employment Acts, it now appears that the lead previously held by this country is being lost by failure to develop medical rehabilitation services more evenly and universally so that availability could compare with that of other branches of medicine and surgery.

The need to provide medical rehabilitation centres with both in-patient and out-patient facilities affiliated to faculties of medicine in general hospitals is detailed, and the importance of training the necessary specialized staff, including rehabilitation medicine physicians, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, and clinical psychologists in sufficient numbers is recognized. Other key features of successful rehabilitation medicine include maintaining close contact between the physician, his team, and the patient, which is best done in units of limited size situated reasonably near the homes of patients where family support can be maintained.

The virtues of centres specializing in treatment of a single pathological condition are mentioned, but on balance the advantages are considered to be with centres dealing with all types of disability.

Throughout the report the essential team work of rehabilitation is clearly stated but the problem of obtain-

ing referral of the patient from a hospital department to the rehabilitation service, whether this be a part of the general hospital or a separate centre, appears to be entirely overlooked.

A good deal of the content of this report is already familiar to doctors in developed countries but it is doubtful if the knowledge is being generally and widely applied. This short report should be studied, particularly by those physicians and surgeons who are not presently involved in medical rehabilitation.

G. C. FLETCHER

The Time Barrier in Personal Injury Claims. By Anthony D. Woolf. (Pp. 88; 30s.) London: Butterworth. 1969.

Mr. Woolf tells us in his preface that this book is designed to provide a clear chart to a complicated Act for busy people who have neither time, energy nor patience for solving jigsaw puzzles and who, unless they are lawyers, 'have not even been told the rules of the game'. If that is so, it seems unfortunate that such a comprehensive title should have been chosen for a short book which the first sentence discloses to be an interpretation of the Limitation Act, 1963. One wonders to whom the book is really addressed for surely the precise interpretation of an Act which 'eminent judges have described as complex and obscure' is a matter for lawyers and not 'busy people who have not been told the rules of the game'. Despite this, for the first part of the book Mr Woolf adopts a rather avuncular style popular among lecturers to students. Personally, I found this a little irritating but there can be no doubt that Mr. Woolf subjects the Act to exhaustive analysis and any reader left in doubt by the wording of the Act itself (which is reprinted as an Appendix) will almost certainly find the explanation of his queries in Mr. Woolf's text.

The style of writing improves in the later chapters although one does not have to be a purist to be slightly shocked at finding two successive sentences beginning with conjunctions. The writer found the chapter on the requirement for leave with its description of the actual procedure of applications particularly helpful and there seems even more point in Mr. Woolf's criticisms of the Act since the decision of the Court of Appeal in *Lucy v W. T. Henley's Telegraph Works Co. Ltd., I.C.I. Ltd.* (Third Party). It seems doubtful, though, whether the whole Act could have been rendered unnecessary by the very simple