

Book Selection

Edited by J. HOUGH

DONALD HICKS: Primary Health Care—A Review	89
H. THIRIEZ & S. ZIONTS (Editors): Multiple Criteria Decision Making	90
G. HAYHURST: Mathematical Programming for Management and Business	90
C. J. CONSTABLE & C. C. NEW: Operations Management: A Systems Approach Through Text and Cases	91
JOSEPH ORLICKY: Materials Requirements Planning	91
R. M. THRALL <i>et al.</i> (Editors): Economic Modelling for Water Policy Evaluation	92
Various Authors: Harvard Business Review—On Management	93

Primary Health Care—A Review

DONALD HICKS

Department of Health and Social Services, H.M.S.O., 1976. 629 pp. £9.50

This sizeable book is a competent review of the primary health care service in the U.K. and of the findings of numerous research studies. It is not an OR book, as such, but is written with a problem-solving style and is a valuable source book for operational researchers interested in this area of application.

It is clear that, despite the vast number of research studies, very little real OR has so far been carried out.

In this country, at least, OR has concentrated on hospital based services whereas it seems quite likely, with the increasing dominance of chronic disorders (heart disease, respiratory disorders, etc.), that preventive medicine, early detection and so on, provided by effective primary health care services, can make a more significant contribution to the overall healthiness of the community.

Although Donald Hicks gives some coverage of technological developments in primary care he perhaps has not attached sufficient importance to experiments using computers to aid diagnosis, the use of scientists in primary medical care, the delegation of medical tasks and so on. Many of these developments are taking place abroad and especially in North America.

The review was prepared as a report to the Department of Health, which explains some of its weaknesses. It seems a little like a "draft" in places and has an overly heavy concentration on the organizational problems caused by the attempts being made in the U.K. to persuade doctors, nurses, health visitors and social workers to work together as equals.

A real fascination of the book is that it reflects Donald Hicks's views on research, Operational Research and on societal problems in general. Not only does he have a profound belief in the importance of OR but he believes that it should be accessible to all: for example, that the primary health care team has a key role to play in a planning (not a planned) society where experimentation and research at the operating level will be a natural activity.

Unfortunately, these views are a little lost in the mass of material being reviewed and may not have the impact they deserve.

A. HINDLE