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and cultural contexts with a sensitivity and imagination that outpaces the Shapiros' much lengthier but more pragmatic treatment of the placebo's history. Andersen, for example, sets the placebo-effect within the context of early modern medical ideas of health and its maintenance; he explores linkages with magic, ritual, and superstition through magic words and magical formulae (the form of words spoken over a sickbed may later be interpreted as witchcraft); he traces the development of the use of the word placebo since the eighteenth century with less scientific precision than the Shapiros, but with intriguing excursions into the anthropological, religious and cultural dimensions of the subject, from healing ceremonies to Sudden Unexpected Nocturnal Death Syndrome and the cultural meaning of nightmares for the Hmong people of Laos. Andersen moves on to mind/body relationships, to AIDS and the will to live, to the issues surrounding "good treatment" and the thoughtful healing of patients. It is a stimulating, thought-provoking chapter, richly suggestive of the diverse cultural significances of the placebo effect: for historians this is perhaps the most rewarding contribution yet on the placebo's past and present significances.

In the final section of the book, Claesson and Nørbaek Sørensen deal with the subject of neuropsychimmunology—an area that the Shapiros left resolutely untouched. Thus the Shapiros note (p. 233): "Our critical, data-oriented review of the literature does not substantiate the belief that placebos and psychological factors have a specific psychological effect on physical illness . . . neuropsychimmunology . . . appears to be characterized more by creative speculation about the interaction of psychological, immunological and brain relationships than by critical studies in human beings. The extensive findings reported are more like neuropsychophysiological perturbations that do not have significant, prolonged, or important clinical effects".

In sharp contrast to this dismissive line, Claesson and Nørbaek Sørensen set out to explore this new area of biological research, which seeks to demonstrate the links between

psychological factors and the immune system. Here, plainly, a new scientific discipline is at once emerging and being contested. The Danish authors manage a convincing account of recent research into the immune system and molecular messengers that connect it to the nervous system, and conclude by expressing the firm belief that neuropsychimmunology will help to illuminate the factors which influence health in general and will enable medicine to make use of the placebo effect in treatment strategies. As with Andersen's informed historical perspective, this chapter contributes exciting new perspectives to the history of the placebo and its effects, and enriches our understanding of their power. Generally speaking, and for its superior factual account of the role of the placebo in psychotherapy and in clinical trials, *The powerful placebo* is likely to become the standard text on this subject, but *Placebo* offers an important extension of the Shapiro account, and one that should not be neglected.

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**Ernest Smith and Beryl Cottell, *A history of the Royal Dental Hospital of London and School of Dental Surgery, 1858–1985*, London and Atlantic Highlands, NJ, Athlone Press, 1997, pp. xi, 177, £17.95 (0-485-11517-4).**

The School of Dental Surgery of the Royal Dental Hospital had the distinction of being the first institution in Britain to provide academic training for dentistry; it also enjoyed the dubious honour of being the first to be closed down. Despite its apparently narrow focus, this highly readable slim volume conveys a good sense of the social, economic, university and medico-political contexts within which academic dentistry has developed since 1858. Its authors were intimately involved in administering the institution during the last decades of its existence. They take a cool and sometimes wry look at some of its myths and demi-gods, informed by a professional

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understanding of the baffling relationship between dental hospitals and their schools.

Addressed in turn are the dental politics which spawned the School, its various locations, the tetchy relations between hospital and school in the inter-war years and the problematic absorption of the hospital into the National Health Service. The tale concludes with the closure of the School as a result of cuts in the overall number of dental students, and an account of the division of the spoils. Along the way, the reader learns of fraudulent Hospital Secretaries, experimental animals falling off roofs, and how the institution was the licensee of a public house—and a good deal about the conflict of interests which arises when a voluntary hospital, supported from charitable donations, exists primarily to give clinical teaching to the students of its School.

The picture which emerges is of an organization locked into the past by pride in its origins. For much of its history the Royal appears to have lagged behind other dental schools in such matters as admitting women, establishing chairs and facilitating research. Its over-attachment to the Licence in Dental Surgery of the Royal College of Surgeons jeopardized its position as a School of the University of London and perpetuated the concept of dentistry as a dependency of general medicine.

Writers on any recent institution face the problem of meeting the divergent expectations of their readers. Alumni may be somewhat disappointed not to find their particular period at the School vividly evoked in the pages of this book, but medical historians will find it a reliable introduction to an area which may be new to them. Those whose interests lie in the history of dentistry may be frustrated by the lack of detailed referencing, the absence of a listing of primary sources and their location, and by a poor index; they may also wish space had allowed for comparison with other dental schools and a consideration of the reaction of the profession as a whole to issues raised. However, the decision appears to have been made to produce a short commemorative history accessible to the general reader. As

such it succeeds admirably and in the process highlights the continuing vulnerability of dentistry to health economics and university politics, and the ambivalence of its relation to general medicine, little changed since the Royal was founded in 1858.

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**Larry R Squire** (ed.), *The history of neuroscience in autobiography*, vol. 1, Washington, DC, Society for Neuroscience, 1996, pp. 607, illus., \$49.00 (0-916110-51-6).

“In the past we have not been sure whether we were anatomists, physiologists or biochemists, psychologists or pharmacologists. But now we know our identity. Largely thanks to Frank Schmitt’s initiative, we are Neuroscientists”. Thus declared J Z Young, one of the contributors to the present volume, in the first F O Schmitt lecture delivered in 1973 (published in *The neurosciences: paths of discovery*, ed. F G Worden, J P Swazey, G Adelman, MIT Press, 1975). Nearly twenty years later, the President of the Society of Neuroscience, Larry Squire, initiated a project to encourage those pioneers who, with Schmitt, did so much to create contemporary neuroscience, to record autobiographical chapters. *The history of neuroscience in autobiography* is the result.

The format of short, non-directed chapters has been deliberately chosen to encourage the participation of busy scientists—although all are well beyond the normal age of retirement (David Hubel, born 1926, is the youngest)—who might be reluctant to undertake a full-scale autobiography. Thus the style resembles that of the introductory chapters that appear every year in the *Annual Reviews*, and the contributors have been left to interpret their brief in their own way. There is little consistency in how each author has responded: some are cheerfully frank about their personal lives, others focus on their laboratory careers to the exclusion of personal and social lives; some emerge from the page as fully formed