Books received

Advances in Neurology Vol. 29. Neurofibromatosis (von Recklinghausen Disease). Genetics, Cell Biology and Biochemistry. Edited by V. M. RICCARDI and J. J. MULVIHILL. Pp. xix + 282, illustrated. Raven Press, New York, 1982. Price not given.

The Coronary Artery. Edited by STANLEY KALSNER. Pp. 775, illustrated. Croom Helm, London and Canberra, 1982. £45.00.

Normal Renal Function. The Excretion of Water, Urea and Electrolytes derived from Food and Drink. By W. J. O'CONNOR. Pp.

v + 433, illustrated. Croom Helm, London and Canberra, 1982. £15.95.

The Pathogenesis of Infectious Disease. By C. A. MIMS. 2nd ed. Pp. ix + 297, illustrated. Academic Press, London, 1982. £11.80 (\$22.00).

Surgical Review 3. Edited by J. S. P. LUMLEY and J. L. CRAVEN. Pp. viii + 315, illustrated. Pitman Books, London, 1982. £19.50.

Books reviews

The Medical Teacher

Edited by K. R. COX and C. E. EWAN. Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh, 1982. £10.00 Pp. 248, illustrated.

This is a well presented, fairly comprehensive multi-author work designed to offer practical help to those who teach clinical medicine. Why do I experience such a feeling of despair tinged with guilt at my reaction when I see books like this—and their number is rapidly increasing? It would be easy to rationalize my feelings and argue that the essential qualities of knowledge and enthusiasm for one's subject are nowhere mentioned in this work. Yet this is clearly not a reasonable response. I can recall many international authorities who have devoted a life-time's effort to their field with extreme single-mindedness who prove to be the most appalling teachers, although admittedly most have been able to stimulate select individuals with their enthusiasm. Clinical medicine has to be taught by amateurs since only practising clinicians can teach it with any degree of credibility; this being so it would seem desirable that we should profit by the experience and knowledge of experts. Flicking through the pages of this book I think I begin to fathom the difficulties I have with this sort of work. It seeks to convey two quite different classes of information. On the one hand we are told, for instance, how to construct a projection slide, what the black spot on it signifies, how to use an overhead projector or what computer programmes are available for teaching. All this is useful, although perhaps a trifle limited. In my experience there are individuals who readily acquire the skills in making good slides; others do not and despite the most powerful negative feed-back in the shape of audience disapproval, these individuals continue to manifest their shortcomings. If a book helps them, all well and good although I would personally be surprised if this was successful where so many more powerful mechanisms have failed. But the greater part of this book is concerned with a quite different, more fundamental, type of issue. For instance, what should be covered in a lecture: should a lecture proceed in a logical sequence from the basic to the advanced or is it more stimulating if this sequence is disrupted? In answer to the first question we are simply told that there are three alternatives: full coverage, representative sampling or highlighting. In deciding the structure of a lecture we learn that there are reasons for a logical sequence that go beyond 'a notion of commonsense: Gagne's work provides excellent support for such a hierarchy. On the other hand, equally cogent arguments supports a reverse sequence (Schulman, 1968). It is statements such as these which make reactionaries like me regard education as a pseudo-science. To take another example. In a chapter on 'How medical students differ from each other' we learn that there are various personality tests such as the Rorschach and Thematic Apperception Technique and Repertory Grid Technique. At the end of this section we read 'Such tests have been of considerable interest to medical educators searching for more effective techniques...'. If at the end of the day there are no final conclusions from the educators we should accept this: the least they can do, however, is to present us with the arguments and the evidence and let us form our own judgement. We are surely capable

of critically assessing the evidence: after all that is the purpose of medical education. The message I receive from books such as this is that there are two sorts of writing about medical teaching. One is factual, technical and carries a simple message and is useful although in a limited way. The other is the subject of discussion and debate: although it clearly also involves factual information I suspect that it contains rather more personal value judgements than is generally recognized. A didactic approach is inappropriate to this and indeed is likely to provoke irritation. It is difficult to combine the two and I fear the authors of this book have not done so too successfully.

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Progress in Obstetrics and Gynaecology Volume 2.

Edited by JOHN STUDD. Pp. 288, illustrated. Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh and London, 1982. £14.00.

The last decade has witnessed a rapid scientific expansion in obstetrics and gynaecology and a trend towards specialization within these subjects. John Studd has succeeded again with this second volume of *Progress in Obstetrics and Gynaecology*, in presenting a diverse feast of subjects where important advances have occurred. The secret lies in an astute knowledge of colleagues, national and international, who are at the forefront of clinical and scientific advance. The preface, a punchy leader any news editor would be proud to publish, promises regular future volumes. There are a total of 23 chapters, and an average of 11 pages per chapter makes this easy reading between cases or late at night. It is well referenced and presented and relevant reading for all obstetricians and gynaecologists, especially MRCOG candidates and their examiners. The life of this book must be at least 5 years and I am sure that some of these chapters will remain as classical monographs.

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The Work of WHO 1980-81

Biennial Report of the Director-General. Pp. 291. Geneva, World Health Organization, 1982. Sw.fr. 18.00.

The 291 pages of this report have twin columns and as much reading matter as a large book. They are not meant for steady reading but rather for reference over a wide range. The text is unequivocal as it must be, for translation into the four official languages, but the idiom is that of the international organizations and apart from the rhetoric of the Director General's introduction has a curiously impersonal, even deadening, effect. Fortunately there is a key to the numerous acronyms and a useful subject index. Nevertheless there is

much in this report that will be useful to organizers of services, teachers and researchers. The range is remarkably wide, from biomedical scientific advances at one extreme to the organization of simple sanitary services at the other. No part of health care services is omitted; the multi-disciplinary nature of these services today and their dependence on social services and economic development are discussed with a realism that professional journals seldom achieve. A summary of this highly condensed material would be impossible.

WHO's greatest technical achievement, the eradication of smallpox, was completed half way through the past decade, but a more significant advance in that time has been the change of emphasis toward primary care as the basis of the declared programme of "Health For All By The Year 2000". This is simplistic, as a slogan is likely to be, but this report shows how the emphasis has moved from technical advance to the wider application of technology appropriate to peoples' needs and circumstances. Technical co-operation among developing countries (one of the many acronyms is TCDC) is seen throughout the programme as far more useful than the gift of sophisticated equipment or establishments by technically advanced countries. There is one striking estimate that 40% of the hundreds of million dollars work of equipment given by well-meaning donors is idle for lack of maintenance facilities. The exchange of scientific or educational resources among neighbours is even more valuable in, say, Africa than in Europe—but both are needed and would be less frequent without WHO. Participation, if not original sponsorship, by WHO is recorded in every part of the world on a scale which is remarkable on so small a budget. Tribute is paid to other organizations within the UN family, especially UNICEF, but WHO's work is now also supported by many voluntary contributions or facilities from individual countries and some private organizations.

Of the fifteen chapters, those on the control of communicable and non-communicable diseases are of special interest and occupy nearly a third of the text. The changes in distribution of some more recently identified diseases such as dengue haemorrhagic fever, monkey pox and Lassa fever are of interest. The over-view of malaria, yellow fever, schistosomiasis and onchocerciasis is not readily available anywhere else. Parasite and vector resistance to drugs and insecticides becomes increasingly important in WHO's work. There is material scattered throughout the report that should be widely available to medical schools.

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Radionuclide Imaging in Drug Research

Edited by C. G. WILSON and J. G. HARDY with M. FRIER and S. S. DAVIS. Pp. 330, illustrated. Croom Helm, London, 1982. £19.95.

This book is a well edited summary of a conference at Nottingham on the interaction between pharmaceutical research and nuclear medicine and brings together data from many sources. Each phase of a clinical trial of a new drug is represented but the degree of coverage is variable. In the pharmaceutical phase, aspects of a drug's bio-availability can be determined by labelling the drug or its slow release coat, by measuring the rate of gastric emptying or the penetration of an enema in colitis. Pharmacokinetics may be aided by using a radioactive gamma-emitting label to follow continuously the absorption, distribution and metabolism of the drug rather than from applying over-zealous compartmental analysis to drug levels in a few samples of blood or urine. It is in pharmacodynamics that

nuclear medicine is particularly helpful; in assessing receptor binding; in estimating side effects such as gastrointestinal bleeding from anti-inflammatory drugs; and the measurement of drug effect on organ function. Renal blood flow, cardiac output and ejection fraction and cerebral blood flow provide examples.

This book includes chapters on dosage design; on radiopharmaceutical targeting in nuclear medicine; and on the choice, formulation and quality control of radiopharmaceuticals, studies in the rat and the rabbit are presented. The disintegration of tablets and the *in vivo* disposition of aerosols, parenterally administered emulsion and labelled liposomes are considered. The *in vivo* radioimmuno-detection of cancer is discussed in general terms with anti-carcinoembryonic antigen as the main example. The book ends with short summaries of the poster sessions.

A useful collection of information is given and it is likely that the two main advantages of nuclear medicine, external detection and objective end points, will lead to its much greater use in clinical trials.

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Statistics in Practice

By SHEILA M. GORE and DOUGLAS G. ALTMAN. Articles published in the British Medical Journal. Pp. 100, illustrated. British Medical Association, London, 1982. £7.00.

The material contained in this book was first published in the *British Medical Journal* as two series of articles intended to illustrate the practical issues involved in applying statistical methods. The approach was used with great success in the introductory series of articles on basic statistical methods entitled 'Statistics at Square One' and is likely once again to prove highly successful in Altman and Gore's book.

Many publications now testify to the fact that in medical research basic statistical methods are often misused. This book has two main objectives; Altman's eight articles review the stages of an investigation and highlight the common pitfalls in each and some ethical implications of inadequate procedure. Suggestions on how standards of publication might be improved are valuable and thought provoking. Gore's articles are more wide ranging and adopt a tutorial format with questions posed and statistical viewpoints discussed with reference to numerous examples from medical journals.

The book is very worthwhile, although it is not a truly cohesive work, reading more as two distinct collections of essays; it thus seems rather repetitive at times. Some cross referencing has been attempted but this is not very well done; for example, we often find references to both the article as originally published in the *British Medical Journal* and to the page in this book where the self-same article is reproduced. Several of the articles can only be understood in detail by reading the cited references since no attempt is made to present details of the statistical tools used. The concentration on problems as they will arise in practice, rather than on purely theoretical approaches, is welcome and likely to help non-mathematical medical researchers to understand the issues and recognize when and when they will need expert statistical help.

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