ision'. In the meantime, MRCP candidates and higher flying senior medical students would find it valuable and the US Resident in dermatology with his pocket full of 'strong' dollars, would find it hard value to beat. I am not giving my review copy away.

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How to Live with Diabetes, Henry Dolger and Bernard Seeman. British edition revised and adapted by Colin McIntosh. Pp.176. Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, New York, Victoria, Markham (Ontario). Auckland, 1984. £2.50.

This book is a pot-pourri of different perspectives on diabetes: metabolic, endocrinological, dietary, historical, anecdotal and apparently mythical. Its discussion ranges from the inter-relationships of ACTH, cortisone, growth hormone, somatostatin, glucagon and insulin, to consideration of the race-related, age-related prevalence of diabetes. Along the way, we learn that the 'Bedford Survey estimated that there are 200 000 000 diabetics in the world', that as well as MODYs (Maturity Onset Diabetes of Youth) there are JODYs, and that 'Eskimos seem to lack the chromosomes for both diabetes and asthma'. Though such varied information may be of differing reliability and veracity and, perhaps, of questionable value to many patients, it is all presented in a refreshing style with a tone lacking the patronizing quality often evident in patient information booklets.

Although the book disclaims the role of a do-it-yourself manual, chapter 7 lists the species of origin and time courses of 25 different insulins and the following chapter provides an 18 step procedure for how to inject yourself. There is a chapter on the historical development of diabetic diets with a lively discussion of the nature of emaciation regimes (in use until 1920s) including the suggestion that some patients died of starvation from the fasting and purgation and the imposition and 'metabolic Sundays' (pray and starve days).

I particularly enjoyed the sections on Science vs Dogmatism and Diabetics Resist Extreme Diets. These may well flesh out the skeletal intuitions of some patients that doctors may not have all of the answers all of the time. By way of confirmation chapter 9 sketches the controversial conclusion of the UGDP Study on the detrimental effect of the use of tolbutamide on mortality. This book is unusual in

presenting medical knowledge, practice, understanding and facts to patients as provisional and historical.

Finally, there are chapters on the complications of diabetes (but curiously only the acute ones) and on the special problems of childhood, adolescent and woman diabetics. Amidst this panoply of diabetic issues and there is no mention of the social class distribution of the condition nor of the role of 'lifestyle' factors in the aetiology of Type 2 DM. The role of the British Diabetic Association as a patient organisation that provides local support groups as well as a collective identity and public image is also sadly absent.

This is surely meant to be a source book of information for the individual patient so that she (all patients and doctors are male) may be better equipped to appreciate all the implications of the disease and its therapy. With a good index but no glossary, diagrams or references it presupposes considerable familiarity with scientific and medical terminology. It is a mine of facts, figures, historical interpretation and medical opinion embedded in a firm scientific optimism.

The last chapter entitled 'On the Threshold of Tomorrow' considers the role of insulin receptors, pumps, islet cell and pancreatic transplants and the artificial pancreas and provides a resoundingly affirmative answer to the question posed on the very first line of the book: 'Will I live?' Answer, yes with our help.

Although the book advertises itself on the front cover as 'The famous book that has helped thousands of diabetics and their families' I wonder what sort of patients would derive most help from a book so studded with information and diversions. I think it should be cautiously recommended to diabetics voraciously hungry for more knowledge, to be taken with a large pinch of fibre. Many doctors with less of a diabetic hunger will both enjoy and learn much from dipping into it.

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The Liver and Biliary System. Aids to Higher Medical Training Series, P.W. Brunt, M.S. Losowsky and S.E. Read. Pp.247, illustrated. William Heinemann Medical Books, London, 1984. £7.95.

This is the first of a series of 10 *Aids to Higher Medical Training* to be published by Heinemann. *The Liver and Biliary System* is a mini-textbook of hepatology and as such succeeds very well. The book is comprehensive,

clear and well written. The figures and tables complement the text. All the chapters gave concise, 'pithy' and up-to-date accounts of diagnosis and treatment. I had no serious criticism of this book and found some parts excellent (such as those on alcohol and drug induced liver disease). I felt more references should be included in a future edition – only one reference seemed an inadequate end to an otherwise excellent chapter on 'Non viral infections of the liver'. This book is aimed at candidates for the MRCP (UK) and at practising clinicians. The major question seems to be how this series will compete with general textbooks of medicine. Candidates for the MRCP (UK) will presumably have to choose between the whole series of these *Aids* and a single work such as the *Oxford Textbook of Medicine* (which would be cheaper). A similar choice will face the clinician for whom this book aims 'to summarize relevant information at rather more length than is possible in a general textbook of Medicine'. I suspect many clinicians first seek a large standard text and then a specialized textbook or review. Nevertheless, these concise books are undoubtedly popular and I am sure this one will be successful.

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The Physically Handicapped Child. An Inter-disciplinary Approach to Management, Edited by Gillian T. McCarthy. Pp.375, illustrated. Faber and Faber, London, Boston, 1984. £6.95 (paperback), £12.50 (cased).

This book lives up to the forward by HRH Prince of Wales. It effectively tackles the widely varied professional aspects of the subject by combined authorship where the 'holistic' approach is particularly important, and provides specialist sections to allow all members of the multidisciplinary team to enjoy a basis for learning from each other. The wide ranging information is up to date and usefully referenced, with additional lists of useful organizations, etc.

In parts, though, revision is needed. In the glossary some terms need fuller explanation, e.g. arthrogryposis, and some technical words in the text should be paraphrased for non-medical readers. Table 1 on page 27 is incomplete for paediatricians and difficult to understand for non-doctors. 'Genetic implications' appears in the heading, but not in the table. No mention of cranial nerve defects is made

other than deafness nor of internal malformations in association with thalidomide, and only few instances of spina bifida occulta have associated neurodeficit. There are also some very uneven patches. There is excellent description regarding a family's reaction to the birth of a handicapped child in Chapter 1, contrasting with the section on psychological effects page 222. Good adjustment in children requires more than that the parents 'do not show anxiety over the limb condition'. Help for them to work through their feelings is recommended elsewhere. Chapter 11 should also include more on the problems of nomenclature, the need for expert genetic guidance (only some types of 'lobster claw' clefting defects are hereditary). The possibility of additional paediatric problems, e.g. thrombocytopenia and Fanconi anaemia should be mentioned or at least the need for full paediatric assessment stressed.

I hope that this book will become a standard reference work and be regularly updated and revised perhaps in future editions with a separate chapter on social work, something on differing attitudes in cultural minorities, something on the potential influence of religion and on the role of the arts for young people with physical and mental handicap. The excellent presentation, printing and price will allow the book to have the wide distribution it deserves.

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Self-Assessment for MRCP (Part 1), Second Edition, C.F. Corke. Pp.x + 244. Blackwell Scientific Publications, Oxford, London, Edinburgh, Boston, Palo Alto, Melbourne, £7.50.

'Facts alone are wanted in life' said Mr Gradgrind. This paperback consists of 250 MCQs followed by 184 pages containing a package of facts related to each topic tested. Looked at away from the panic of the MRCP exam the questions seem rather unimaginative; but then designing good MCQs is difficult. The balance of the subjects chosen detracts a little from its usefulness as a revision tool. Haematology is covered by over 10% of the questions but respiratory medicine and pharmacology each amount to less than 5%. There are three questions each about porphyria and muscular dystrophy. The arrangement of the questions is rather curious. They are neither in subject groups, so making it awkward for systematic revision,