Book Reviews

Aids to Undergraduate Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Christopher Sinclair and J. Beverley Webb. Pp. iii + 191, illustrated. Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh, London, Melbourne, New York, 1986. £4.95.

The authors of this newly-published text for undergraduates state in their preface that they 'believe that examination technique is as important as adequate factual knowledge'. This implies that the book provides a way for qualifying to be a doctor, requiring little attention to basic facts. That surely is not a philosophy to be encouraged. The idea of producing a small hand-book to remind the medical student or the newly-qualified resident of differential diagnoses, aetiological factors, investigation results and treatments is reasonable but the authors have not shown in their lists any logic to the order within each list presenting the information to be learnt parrot-fashion. Some of the diagrams I found confusing, notably those involving the menstrual cycle physiology where the days of the cycle are numbered somewhat illogically and many of the flow charts I did not find easy to follow, with the occasional obvious omission. The diagrams are generally very basic and in some instances, unclear or containing mistakes. There are unfortunately a number of spelling and other mistakes throughout the volume and some, such as that on page 88 relating to sperm density, should never have passed beyond the proof-reading stage. The style, in places, is rather slovenly, referring to tumours '... in the wildest possible sense ...' and when referring to breastfeeding statements like '... contains the right things in the right amounts ...'; this is hardly the standard that medical students should expect.

For a new book to be introduced onto the market, a market already thriving with undergraduate textbooks, a significant improvement upon those presently available is required. This small textbook does not meet that requirement, I believe, and I do not think would be much of an aid to undergraduates sitting their examinations in obstetrics and gynaecology.

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Annual Review of Genetics, Vol. 19, 1985, edited by Allan Campbell, Ira Herskowitz and Laurence M. Sandler. Pp. xii + 590, illustrated. Annual Reviews, Palo Alto, California, 1985. \$27.00 (USA), \$30.00 (elsewhere). Prices include postage and handling.

A brief look at the contents page of the most recent *Annual Review of Genetics* reveals a selection of authoritative articles whose titles, by and large, do not immediately compel the interest of the student of medicine. Of the 19 articles in this 575 page volume only two (on HPRT and insulin genes)

have a distinctly medical flavour while three dwell on aspects of microbial genetics (mutation suppression in *E. coli*, regulation of transcription initiation in bacteria and recent progress in reovirus research), three on plant genetics (structure and function of yeast centromeres, Maize Adhl, comparative organization of chloroplast genomes), one of the genetics of *Drosophila* embryogenesis and three on other mammalian systems (mouse genetics, mouse t haplotypes and mammalian cell-cycle mutants). The remainder encompass broader perspectives including population genetics, DNA repair systems, chromatin structure, specific techniques (*in vitro* mutagenesis and hybrid genes) and aspects of gene organization (processed pseudogenes) and of gene regulation (by steroid receptors).

Of the two articles devoted to cloned human genes, that by D.F. Steiner and colleagues on insulin genes is however largely confined to structural and evolutionary aspects and emphasizes that insulin is one member of a superfamily of several insulin-like growth factors. In contrast, the article by J.T. Stout and C.T. Caskey on the hypoxanthine phosphoribosyl transferase (HPRT) gene focuses on the molecular pathogenesis of HPRT deficiency associated with Lesch-Nyhan syndrome and gout, and considers the future prospect of gene therapy.

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Antibiotic Therapy in Clinical Practice, C. Simon, W. Stille and P.J. Wilkinson. Pp. xiii + 559, illustrated. F.K. Schattauer, Stuttgart, New York, 1985. DM 78.00.

This book is a first English edition of a successful German textbook now in its fifth edition. The third author, Dr P.J. Wilkinson, joined a successful team to facilitate the transformation. The book is divided usefully into five sections, basic concepts, properties of the drugs, general rules of therapy, treatment of infections and special therapeutic problems. Unfortunately, translation is not the only barrier to crossing the Channel; readers more familiar with English language publications will realise that a different bibliography has been used as source material. Some topics have a bibliography only in German. The text is not referenced and this is particularly irksome when the authors dogmatically state as fact an area of controversy or dispute.

In its favour is the compactness of the tome, and the breadth and ease of referencing information. The readers must, however, remember that not all the treatment regimes cited in this text as being first line choice have gained full acceptance in the UK. In particular, the fondness of the authors for beta-lactam/beta-lactam rather than aminoglycoside/beta-lactam combinations in the seriously ill is still controversial.

Although this book has not achieved universality and