Book Reviews

Advanced Medicine 21. Proceedings of a Conference Held at the Royal College of Physicians of London 11–14 February 1985, edited by Morris J. Brown. Pp. x + 450, illustrated. Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh, London, Melbourne, New York, 1986. £35.00.

With this report the proceedings of the Conferences in Advanced Medicine held at the Royal College of Physicians come of age. They have been of immense value to general physicians working throughout the country.

The 1985 Conference was no exception. It is, however, a great disappointment that the Report has taken so long to publish. Dr Morris Brown wrote his forward to this volume in May, 1985 and it has taken more than a year for the book to appear. A great part of the value of these conferences is that they bring one up to date. Research and knowledge advance very quickly in medicine these days. Opinions about management change quickly too. It should surely be the aim of publishers to get this Report out within the year.

There should have been firmer editing of the figures and tables and their captions. Many captions are difficult to understand or insufficient, presumably because in his talk the lecturer expanded the description. Some figures contain information not referred to in the caption or the text and are therefore irritating. A number of the illustrations have not reproduced well and could have been left out.

Nevertheless, there are some excellent lectures reported here. The topics covered in the Conference were endocrinology, liver and gastro-intestinal disease, cardiology and vascular disease, dermatology, neurology, haematology, a small amount of renal medicine and a section on new methods of diagnostic imaging. Not surprisingly, the style was patchy, some speakers having the gift of clarity and others not. Most lecturers have given their references and this is one of the particular values of this book, it opens the door to a much greater bank of information for those who wish to study a subject in greater detail.

All in all, this book is an excellent weekend's reading for the general physician. However, at £35.00 it is too expensive and it has come out too late. A cheaper production appearing during the autumn following the Conference, even though it might have many blemishes, would be a better proposition.

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Atlas of Drug Reactions, R. Douglas Collins. Pp. xii + 419, illustrated. Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh, London, Melbourne, New York, 1985. £55.00.

According to the preface, 'there is a need for an alternative to existing sources for a quick reference presenting the adverse reactions to common drugs in a simple, organised and easily remembered fashion.' This colour atlas represents an attempt to fulfil that need. Common unwanted effects are presented

for many drugs on a 'see through' torso. For some this approach works well: corticosteroids and tricyclic antidepressants, for example. However, for others this approach is less satisfactory: it seems a little odd to have Raynaud's phenomenon occurring just below the groin!

A more serious criticism of the book stems from its American origin. The transatlantic drug lag means that 10 of the 34 substances which I looked up were not even mentioned, e.g. amiloride, atenolol, ipratropium, salbutamol, temazepam and trimethoprim, and 2 others (inhaled beclomethasone and ranitidine) are mentioned by name only. Furthermore, the section on calcium blocking drugs is poor – again reflecting limited use of these compounds in the USA.

The other 'unique' feature of the book is a toxicity rating on the frequency, severity and reversibility of adverse reactions. Although attractive in theory, I was unimpressed by the ratings for penicillins, which were the same as digoxin – medium.

In summary, I found this book a disappointment. British prescribers are likely to find the National Formulary of greater use, especially as it contains information on the relative merits of alternative drugs, dosage and presentation. Additional useful information on adverse effects can be gleaned from the ABPI Data Sheet Compendium. Together these reference sources would, in my view, provide a more balanced and fuller account and they are both 'free'.

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Care of the Child with Diabetes, edited by J.D. Baum and A.L. Kinmonth. Pp. xiv + 228, illustrated. Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh, London, Melbourne, New York, 1985. £24.00.

There is a relative shortage of books devoted to the management of the diabetic child so the contribution by Drs Baum and Kinmonth summarizing the Oxford school of thought is a welcome addition. It is fortunate that the two editors summarized their ideas and experiences before embarking on further careers outside Oxford.

There are three principle sections starting with the traditional format of pathogenesis, natural history and epidemiology of diabetes. A contribution from the father of a diabetic child is informative and beautifully written but seems misplaced. The next section called The Tools of Management by the editors includes useful contributions on insulin and different forms of its delivery, dietary management, the metabolic and hormonal response to exercise and finally a child psychiatrist's role as a member of the diabetic team. There is an undoubted contribution to be made by such a person; however I was disappointed by the contents of this chapter which relied heavily on an anecdotal

pot pourri of case reports. The strength of the book lies within the third section which deals with the nuts and bolts of looking after the diabetic child, both in and out of hospital. It is inevitable that some parts of this book are already dated; I also deprecate the use of references to work submitted, in press or only presented at meetings. Nevertheless, this is a book which will readily appeal to nurses, dieticians and doctors, and perhaps some parents involved in the care of diabetic children.

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Clinics in Anaesthesiology. Vol. 4, no. 3, July 1986. Preparation for Anaesthesia, edited by J. Stevens. Pp. ix + Pp. 445–798, illustrated. W.B. Saunders, London, Philadelphia, Toronto, 1986. £13.50.

Preparation for Anaesthesia originally appeared six years ago in standard text book form. This volume of *Clinics in Anaesthesiology* is in fact a second edition, considerably improved by revision and expansion to include sections on cardiac hepatic and renal disease. The 19 chapters are nearly all by UK authors who write clearly and succinctly. Good editing has ensured minimal repetition, overlap or conflicting advice. There are no illustrations and few figures, but the quality of text, its division into headed sections and excellent printing and binding make for easy reading of a vast amount of information.

The title is somewhat misleading. As well as the investigation and pre-operative management of patients for general or local anaesthesia, several chapters include basic descriptions of physiology and pharmacology, there is a dissertation on day case surgery and a superb chapter on legal liability. Many of the contributions start very simply, but all develop a comprehensive and up to date survey of their subject. This provides an ideal framework for FFA candidates preparing written and oral answers. It also will be useful to practising anaesthetists and clinicians of other disciplines who seek guidance on the importance to anaesthesia of many disease states and congenital abnormalities. Criticisms are few. The one US contribution is pretentiously verbose; the outstanding author on legal liability does not appear in the list of contributors; magnesium trisilicate should no longer be advised as the pre-operative antacid; on page 714, the dose of metaraminol (20–100 mg) is one of the rare printing errors.

Most large departments of anaesthesia will be subscribers to *Clinics in Anaesthesiology*. This particular edition should certainly be available to all anaesthetists, and medical librarians should be alerted to the wealth of information for other clinicians which is hidden in this volume of a specialty serial.

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Colour Atlas of Cardiovascular Pathology, M.J. Davies. Oxford Colour Atlases of Pathology. Pp.186, illustrated. Harvey Miller, London, in conjunction with Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1986. £60.00.

Professor Davies' previous writings lead us to expect, in this atlas, a lucid and well illustrated account of the general field of cardiac pathology; in this we are not disappointed. One of the most valuable aspects is the stressing of correlations between patho-physiological states and the structural changes seen by pathologists. In this connection, a particularly valuable component is Professor Davies's account of the way in which cardiac dissection may be carried out in echocardiographic planes. The many photographs are aesthetically pleasing, as well as being informative, and the high quality of the paper used and of the colour reproduction make this book a pleasure to handle.

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Farquharson's Textbook of Operative Surgery, Seventh edition, edited by R.F. Rintoul. Pp.v + 658, illustrated. Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh, London, Melbourne, New York, 1986. £45.00.

In 1954, Eric Farquharson, a distinguished Edinburgh surgical teacher, produced a one volume, one author textbook of operative surgery written by a general surgeon. It covered the whole field of operative surgery and immediately became popular among FRCS candidates as well as single-handed surgeons who have had to deal with a wide range of surgical conditions. Since then, times have changed and there are few, if any, surgical practitioners today who can claim expertise in the ever-widening spectrum of techniques of modern surgery. The present author is now joined by 15 colleagues from the United Kingdom. These comprise four general surgeons, three orthopaedic surgeons, specialists in ENT, plastic, neuro-, cardiothoracic, gynaecological and paediatric surgery, and a director of a Regional Blood Transfusion Service.

The seventh edition, however, maintains the original flavour of a single volume text that covers the whole of operative surgery. It is clearly written, illustrated by numerous clear line diagrams and photographs (some in colour), and provided with a bibliography of specialist references. It is completely up to date, with, for instance, details of stapling methods of intestinal anastomoses, modern percutaneous and endoscopic urological techniques and recently developed plastic flap closures of major cutaneous defects.

This new edition of 'Farquharson' is sure to maintain its well-deserved popularity with candidates working for their higher surgical examinations.

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