Book Reviews

Anaesthesia – Review 4, edited by Leon Kaufman. Pp. 234. Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh, London, Melbourne, New York, 1987. £14.95.

The essence of any Review is that it is as up to date as possible. As an editor myself, one can only have sympathy for colleagues trying to get a multi-author publication out as quickly as possible. This excellent paperback, the fourth in the series edited by Dr Leon Kaufman, was planned to appear on the 140th Anniversary of the demonstration of ether anaesthesia at University College Hospital on December 21st 1846. The publication date slipped back to May 1987, not much, but the result is that the vast majority of the references are from 1985, 1984 or even earlier.

Nevertheless, it is a useful book for anaesthetists to browse through. If the sixteen subjects covered are ones you wish to scan, if you want references galore, you need look no further. Of particular value are the chapters written by physicians, or with a strong medical, as opposed to anaesthetic, slant. Clinical anaesthetists can all too easily fall behind with some of the pharmacological advances in cardiac and respiratory care. The chapters on asthma and antiarrhythmic drugs I found particularly helpful, while of the specifically anaesthetic topics, chapters on narcotics, recovery from neuromuscular blockade, and laser surgery anaesthesia were also clear and, considering the limited space, comprehensive.

If one was to express a reservation, two chapters headed 'Update' seem less than necessary. Cardiac arrest is followed by one 1985 reference, as is midazolam. Fentanyl merits four, one from 1976, none newer than 1984. And some of these that follow the endocrine response to stress appear earlier in the book in the section on the endocrine response to surgery.

Anaesthetic Review is a good series. I hope they keep appearing, but surely it should be possible for the finished article to be published within six months of the last chapter being submitted.

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Atlas of Clinical Gastroenterology, edited by J.J. Misiewicz, C.I. Bartram, P.B. Cotton, A.S. Mee, A.B. Price and R.P.H. Thompson. Illustrated. Edward Arnold, Gower Medical Publishing, London, New York, 1987. £57.50.

The concept of this new atlas by 6 British authors is excellent – to provide extensive visual documentation of the normal and abnormal using clinical photographs, pathological specimens, histology, radiology and other imaging techniques. I understand the slides have been taken from a 20 volume slide collection which numerous gastroenterologists have already found very useful in preparing lectures for teaching purposes.

The strength of the book is when all the modalities have been brought together successfully. The colour is generally good but the histology slides stained with haematoxylin and eosin are sometimes uniformly purple. The explanatory line drawings are excellent. Despite the vast number of illustrations, one felt the authors had been forced, in producing an atlas of reasonable size, to omit complementary studies. Some of the endoscopic pictures are of very poor quality, particularly those of the upper gastro-intestinal tract. Better quality pictures should have been demanded for printing in an atlas of this stature.

The main criticism is that of the text. The authors have not given any lead or guidance as to which investigations are least expensive and invasive and most productive in various problems. For instance we all know that isotope scans, ultrasound and CT can all demonstrate hepatic secondaries. But the pick up rates, and what determines these, are crucial information and guidance should have been given. The section on pancreatic carcinoma and ampullary carcinoma is muddled. The advice to remove a bezoar endoscopically is rash. The clinical differentiation of Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis without emphasis on incidence of pain and bleeding is unusual. When 2 pages are given to oesophageal atresia, surely the omission of any mention of Mallory Weiss tears, a common condition, is a misjudgement – or was this the deliberate mistake left for the reviewer, and why can't the English spell (celiac and esophagus – ugh!).

Overall a good try and a splendid idea, but one looks forward to a more discriminating and polished second edition.

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Atlas of Pediatric Physical Diagnosis, edited by Basil J. Zitelli and H.W. Davis. Pp. xiii + 496, illustrated. Edward Arnold, New York, London, 1987. £65.

This new book is outstanding. It might however perhaps be more accurately described as an extremely well illustrated work on physical diagnosis in paediatrics rather than as an 'atlas'. The authors, who are almost all affiliated to the University of Pittsburgh, are to be congratulated on the text which is substantial and authoritative but written with a clarity and style seldom encountered in American textbooks. The scope is comprehensive so that almost all of the established paediatric medical and surgical subspecialties are separately represented and the often neglected fields of paediatric nutrition, abuse, and gynaecology, are all included.

There are numerous tables which encapsulate schemes of classification and differential diagnoses in a succinct, carefully laid out format and which are given prominence by means of a lightly toned background. Full use is also made of line drawings and diagrams, coloured where