uncommon diseases, while the specialist is kept in touch with basic science trends which may impinge on any of his interests.

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*Functional Histology* must rank highly amongst text-books on morphology. Such texts tend to be verbose, the author trying to cram so much detail into the work as to obscure the basic essentials and ideas and to confuse the reader. Not so this work, which, in its second edition, maintains the high standard of the first. Whether one is studying normal or abnormal morphology, a clear basic understanding is essential, particularly with regard to the latter. Here functional histology remains vital to an understanding of histopathology.

The second edition is once again a mixture of superb colour photographic photomicrographs, electron micrographs and line drawings, the former being, once again, outstanding in their clarity of detail and the accuracy of their colour.

The texts accompanying the illustrations are succinct and very much to the point and form a natural adjunct to the former. Once again this is a very valuable addition to the library of works on morphology, maintaining the high standard set by the first edition.

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Homoeopathy is perhaps the most enigmatic of all the so-called complementary therapies. Unlike the manipulative therapies, osteopathy and chiropractic, it is practised not by specially-trained practitioners, but largely by doctors with normal undergraduate training. Unlike acupuncture it is not mysteriously oriental, but originates in the European enlightenment, and has developed in parallel with modern orthodox medicine. It is the only form of complementary medicine to have dedicated NHS facilities (there are five NHS homoeopathic hospitals in the UK).

The last decade has seen a strong and sustained growth in the demand for homoeopathic medicine among the general public. Somewhat belatedly, this is now being followed by a surge of interest from the medical profession, driven partly by the increasing intrusion of market forces into the delivery of health care and career structures, and partly by a steady trickle of high-quality research publications demonstrating that there is more to homoeopathy than the placebo effect.

Publishers are never slow to spot a promising trend, and this book is one of a crop of recent publications. It has a good pedigree: Robin Gibson is a consultant at the Glasgow Homoeopathic Hospital, and his wife Sheila a clinical assistant there, with a strong academic background. Between them, they are responsible for a number of important pieces of research, particularly in rheumatoid arthritis.

The problem with this book is, it seems to me, that it takes its title too literally. In attempting to provide something for everyone, the authors have fallen into a compromise which may prove unsatisfactory for everyone. For instance, the clinical material and the vision of the future presented by the Gibsons will do little to convince a sceptical doctor. Although the survey of the research scene in homoeopathy is the fullest yet published in English, it is not fully up-to-date or comprehensive. At the same time, patients looking for simple, basic information will find it difficult to locate in this book.

Doctors with a serious interest in understanding or practising homoeopathy will be much better served by one of the recent textbooks, such as Boyd’s *Introduction to Homoeopathic Medicine*, or Koehler’s *Handbook of Homoeopathy*, while those looking for a fundamental approach to the physical chemistry of extremely high dilutions will find Resch and Gutmann’s *Scientific Foundations of Homoeopathy* a challenging read.

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A basic radiological text should be comprehensive, readable and practical, particularly when aimed at junior staff or as an introduction to training in radiology. Hopefully it may then also appeal to physicians as an overview of conventional techniques as related to the newer imaging or scanning methods. Besides being informative, it should be well presented with clear relevant illustrations, adequately captioned, and arrowed. Nothing should be left to the readers’ imagination.

Pride of place, however, should be given to the rapid progress made by radiology in the last 15 years leading to a whole range of new activities both diagnostic and therapeutic. Sonography, to take just one example, has branched out in several directions. Anatomical detail is now excellent and regions previously considered inappropriate are now routinely examined. Thyroid, testes, joints and neonatal heads are some areas where sonography is preferred. Then there is its role in localising lesions for biopsy, cytology and abscess drainage. Both the needle tip and the abnormality can be shown in ‘real time’ so that one can actually see the tip of the needle entering and in the lesion. Echocardiography has proved to be of extreme value and Doppler ultrasound is being applied to blood flow, not only for superficial arteries but even for the renal and mesenterics. The advances and applications of computed tomography, magnetic
resonance imaging, nuclear medicine and digital vascular imaging are equally impressive.

Faced with such an array of investigation, a logical choice can be difficult. Of course the local radiologists will help by knowing the capabilities of their own equipment. Nevertheless another informed view, to be contemplated at leisure, can do no harm and may well put a different point of view, if such guidance is available. Imaging in Internal Medicine can be recommended without hesitation as Robert L. Siegle of the Medical Centre of San Antonio, Texas and his team of contributors go a long way towards acting as effective guides through the present maze of diagnostic procedures. Housestaff, radiologists in training and, dare one add, physicians should find this text extremely useful. Unlike the proverbial Texan product, it is quite modest in size, very modest in price and obviously good value for money.

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This paperback is subtitled ‘A light-hearted guide to medical terms’. It consists of delightful essays first published in the British Medical Journal between 1977 and 1986; sometimes updated, corrected or rewritten but still just as enjoyable. The origin of medical terms is always a nightmare to anybody other than a classical scholar, and also to most medical students nowadays. Once the medical term is explained, as in this little book, then out bubble many pleasurable facets of disorders, investigations, therapeutics and other day-to-day usages. It is really a bedside pleasure book, which the reader can dip into at leisure. To make this easier there is a general index and also an index of foreign words; both are most helpful etymological sources. The author has enjoyed plunging into the depths of the Oxford English Dictionary and he also acknowledges the advice of many experts, linguists, anthropologists, anatomists, and an expert in hieroglyphs amongst them. There is a particularly felicitous acknowledgement to Digitus Medius Dexter for typing this work. This book is recommended for students of any age and every discipline.

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This pocket-sized manual of cardiology was written as a practical guide for students and junior medical staff, and it has achieved its purpose admirably for the graduate but I think it is perhaps too detailed and technical in parts for the student, e.g. myocardial scintigraphy in coronary disease, technique of coronary arteriography and angioplasty, to cite two examples.

This little book is packed full of useful practical information and, although the author apologises in the foreword for his ‘didactic’ approach, it is a commendably balanced approach which is successful in giving a fair and up-to-date view of cardiological thinking in a number of areas where differences of opinion exist, e.g. surgical intervention in coronary artery disease, classification of cardiomypathy, medical vs surgical treatment of pulmonary embolism. The sections on symptoms and signs in various conditions are particularly good, but the author does have a regrettable tendency to advise ‘routine’ haematology and biochemistry in a number of conditions where these tests are unlikely to be helpful in diagnosis or management, e.g. aortic dissection.

What about criticisms? The major criticism is in the actual format and presentation of the book. The rather small print is often dense and tightly packed in pages unrelieved by adequate headings, illustrations or tables. The tables themselves are generally poor and usually placed at the bottom of the page in even smaller print bunched up on the left side of the page. They are difficult to read and sometimes left me slightly bemused, e.g. Table 5.1 on the causes of pulmonary oedema (page 91). There are one or two other minor criticisms of content: embolism is not mentioned as a possible important complication of mitral valve prolapse, the alternative explanation for ‘reciprocal’ ST depression in myocardial infarction — multivessel disease — is not considered and the rarity of the ‘Austin Flint’ murmur not pointed out to the unsuspecting student who hears a mitral stenotic murmur in a patient with aortic incompetence.

These criticisms aside, this is an excellent practical little book on up-to-date cardiological thinking in a number of common cardiac conditions for both hospital doctors and general practitioners, as well as senior students. Not the least of its merits is its modest price, particularly when compared with the more expensive cardiological tomes on both sides of the Atlantic.

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This is an interesting contribution to the current debate on changes which should be made to our health system. It proposes two major changes in the present compulsory system of licensing of medicines, and financing their use. Firstly, legislative restraints and control on the introduction of medicines should be replaced by a voluntary system, the responsibility for their use devolving to much greater extent on patients who would, or would not, give their informed consent to treatment after full explanation of the risk—benefit issues involved from better