The only British rival is the established atlas of Spillane and Spillane (2nd edn., Oxford University Press, 1982). This is a sophisticated work with a more historical bias, but better suited perhaps to the postgraduate. The choice is really a matter of personal taste. Parsons' book is guaranteed a warm welcome by undergraduates and postgraduates alike. Its high cost however, may daunt the private collector; but what a nice present from Consultant to his registrar. Or, do I mean *vice versa*?

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Diabetes Mellitus. Theory and Practice

Edited by MAX ELLENBERG and HAROLD RIFKIN. Pp. xx + 1105, illustrated. Medical Examination Publishing Company, New Hyde Park, New York, 1983. \$95.00.

My first reaction to this 57 chapter, 1,105 page book was that it is just another excessively long and expensive American textbook. However on closer examination it is clearly a marvellous reference book on every aspect of diabetes. It is not a book for the amateur and in general it would be difficult to sift simple and important principles of diabetic management from the vast quantity of information it contains. Yet as a source of reference it is invaluable, written as it is by many authors of international distinction. To the great credit of the editors it is well up to date with a considerable bibliography from 1980–1982. Many chapters are devoted to novel aspects of diabetes, from its aetiology, including descriptions of the insulin gene to new methods of insulin delivery; from detailed metabolic observations to diabetic complications including an entirely novel chapter describing development of foot evaluation and care. Illustrations are mediocre and insufficient in number and, most notably in the chapter on the eye, there are hardly any photographs of retinopathy. There are some lengthy and less fortunate sections where the relevance to diabetes is remote, such as the eight pages and 129 references on dental and oral aspects. A lot of space is wasted on excessive bibliography—lengthy in most chapters, with a maximum of over 500 references after one of them!

This is an important reference book on diabetes. It is essentially, as the editors state, a 'new book'. It will not be a great help to a district physician needing clear advice on routine care but it is essential to all those who need to immerse themselves in the vast and fascinating literature on diabetes.

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Laboratory Investigation of Endocrine Disorders

By MICHAEL R. WILLS and BILL HAVARD. 2nd edn. Pp. xiii + 111. Butterworths, London, Boston, Durban, Singapore, Sydney, Toronto, Wellington, 1983. £5.50.

The first edition of this compact manual appeared in 1979 and provided a basic guide to available endocrine laboratory tests and their interpretation. It provided a convenient source of information both for the clinician working in endocrinology and the laboratory-based scientist. In this edition, the original text has been updated and extended to include a chapter dealing with disorders of calcium homeostasis with particular reference to hypercalcaemia and hypocalcaemia. A useful appendix has also been added on reference values.

The book forms a digest of the considerable personal experience of the authors in the clinical and laboratory investigation of patients with endocrine disorders. The protocols and tests described are all well established and non-controversial. It is a pity that in updating no mention has been made of the increasing use of free serum thyroxine in the investigation of thyroid function. The dimensions of the 2nd edition have been increased making it a little less convenient

for a white coat pocket where it is likely to be found rather than the bookcase. In such a handbook, the ability to find information quickly is important and an index would have been useful. Practical information on a specific topic sometimes appears on different pages in the text. For example, a clinician wishing to find information on sample preparation for the estimation of plasma cortisol would turn to page 30 but would not learn that certain drugs interfere with the measurement until page 33. However, these are small criticisms of an excellent handbook.

Today, with the increasing number of tests available for the investigation of patients, it is important that appropriate tests are undertaken and equally important that the correct specimens are sent to the laboratory.

This little book will certainly earn its keep.

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Modern Aspects of Gold Therapy Rheumatology. An Annual Review. Vol. 8

Edited by M. SCHATTENKIRCHNER and W. MULLER. Pp. 229, illustrated. Karger, Basle, 1983. Sw. Fr. 130.00 \$78.00

Recent work on Auranofin, an oral gold compound, has stimulated renewed interest in gold therapy for rheumatic diseases. This volume is the proceedings of the 1982 international gold workshop in Munich. There are 13 papers on pharmacology and 14 on clinical experience with both parenteral and oral gold. Many of the contributors are leading investigators in rheumatology and, as expected, the overall standard of presentation is high.

The papers range from reviews on the measurement of gold levels in the body to the action of gold compounds on the immune response; from the place of parenteral gold therapy in rheumatoid arthritis to the measurement of the clinical efficacy of these agents. It is refreshing that undue emphasis is not given to clinical trials of Auranofin.

The mechanism by which gold compounds exert a therapeutic effect is unclear and the papers on the differing effects of oral and parenteral preparations on the inflammatory process, cellular and humoral responses are of particular interest. There are also two speculative papers concerning the effect of gold compounds on DNA metabolism.

Rheumatologists are beset by an ever increasing number of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, many of which are of a dubious pedigree and efficacy. It is widely held that parenteral gold compounds are of value in rheumatoid arthritis and the prospect of an effective oral agent is exciting.

This is a specialist volume which will be of interest primarily to clinical pharmacologists and rheumatologists. The text is amply referenced and can be recommended for a departmental library.

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The Nature of General Family Practice. 583 Clinical Vignettes in Family Medicine. An Alternative Approach to Syllabus Development

Edited by W. E. FABB and J. R. MARSHALL. Pp. xx + 660. MTP Press, Lancaster, Boston, The Hague, 1983. £19.95.

This rather novel book consists of a collection of almost 600 short case histories of patients who have presented to 60 general practitioners or family physicians in ten countries including Australia, Canada, South Africa and England.

The Australian editors are the Director and Assistant Director of Education, Family Medicine Programme at the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners.

The book is divided into two parts. The first contains a short history followed by four or five major questions requiring a broad