Book Reviews

Acute Pain, edited by Graham Smith and Benjamin G. Covino. Pp. ix + 283, illustrated. Butterworths, London, Boston, Durban, Singapore, Sydney, Toronto, Wellington, 1985. £32.50.

In the preface of this book the editors state that despite the prevalence of acute pain, there is currently no available text providing a comprehensive review of treatment and that this volume is their response to this perceived lacuna in the existing literature. Their offering goes a long way to filling this need but just how far depends very much on the viewpoint of the individual reader.

The eleven chapters (283 pages) deal not only with the treatment of acute pain but also its measurement, the physiological mechanisms of its cause and psychological factors affecting patient response. A wealth of information is gathered together and presented, for the most part, in a manner that is easy to understand, assimilate and regurgitate for practical utilisation. Its value would have been enhanced, nonetheless, by the inclusion of a more catholic spectrum of analgesic agents, a more detailed appraisal of the treatment of cardiac and hollow viscus pain and some of the more basic nursing and physiotherapeutic procedures.

However, perfection is hard to achieve and although each reader will define his own criticisms and be able to delineate certain omissions, the editors are to be congratulated both for grasping the nettle of the concept and for assembling authors who write with authority and clarity; attributes not always found in close proximity.

This book can be recommended without hesitation not only to those whose main interest is in purveying analgesia but also to the whole spectrum of medical and nursing practitioners.

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Annual Review of Microbiology. Vol. 38, 1984, edited by L. Nicholas Ornston, Albert Balows and Paul Bauman. Pp. xlv + 613, illustrated. Annual Reviews, Palo Alto, California, 1984. \$27.00 (U.S.A.), \$30.00 (elsewhere), (prices include postage and handling).

This latest volume in the Annual Review of Microbiology series comprises twenty-two chapters on widely disparate aspects of microbiology prefaced by a curious autobiographical overview entitled 'Learning'. The authors are predominantly American though contributions from Canada, Finland, Holland and the UK are also included. The numerous references unfortunately do not include article titles, an annoying omission that is apparently to be rectified in Volume 40. Fundamental aspects of microbiology predominate and microbial physiology, metabolism and genetics make taxing reading for the medical microbiologist. Some of the subjects considered will be entirely foreign to the medical reader – the cyanobacteria, the thiobacilli, the

barotolerant deep sea psychrophiles and the iron and manganese depositing bacteria to name a few. Thus inevitably with such a broad canvas encompassing the whole discipline of microbiology most microbiologists whatever their specific interest will only find certain chapters of the Annual Review relevant to them. For the medical reader there are useful updates on gonococcal genetics, monoclonal antibodies, Bacteroides of the human lower intestinal tract, toxic shock syndrome and the structure and mode of action of vancomycin. However, reviews of these subjects are readily obtainable elsewhere and, overall, *Annual Review of Microbiology* could not be recommended as a worthwhile investment for the medical microbiologist. One is left wondering for whom the book is destined and quite what purpose these reviews serve.

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Annual Review of Nutrition. Vol. 4, 1984, edited by William J. Darby, Harry P. Broquist and Robert E. Olson. Pp. xi + 610, illustrated. Annual Reviews, Palo Alto, California, 1984. \$27.00 (U.S.A.), \$30.00 (elsewhere), (prices include postage and handling).

There are so many developments in knowledge of the role of nutrition in the pathogenesis and management of disease processes that it is extremely valuable to have this review of the subject by a series of N. American authors under the editorship of Professors Darby, Broquist and Olson. There are twenty chapters with a considerable range in emphasis. A number of basic science topics are addressed – adverse effects of excessive consumption of amino acids (Benevenga), nutritive factors affecting bioactivation and detoxification of chemicals (Guengerich), selenium (Coombs), vitamin K (Olson), branched-chain amino acid metabolism (Harper), essential amino acids (Vissek) and vitamin B₆ metabolism (Inks). However, each is more than just a review of biochemical pathways; their clinical significance is always emphasised.

The increase in interest in nutritional physiology in recent years is reflected by some excellent chapters including protein and energy metabolism during lactation (Sampson), ultra trace elements (Nielsen) and fluoride (Rao). Most sections were clear but the latter would have benefitted from an inclusion of the legal aspects of fluoridation of water supplies. An excellent chapter on vitamin A (Sommer) is perhaps of greatest use for those working in a developing country but the introduction to the possible clinical importance of vitamin A deficiency in immune deficiency has wider implications.

There are some practical chapters on clinical nutrition including home parenteral nutrition (Howard), food allergy (Atkins), tests for B vitamin deficiency (Saubertlich), dietary fats (Emken), the calcium/ osteoporosis story (Avioli) and vitamin D metabolism (Henry). There are two chapters on comparative nutrition – that on feline nutrition (McDonald)