would benefit from additional editing, it is a handy and quick reference giving the authors' preferences on suitable therapeutic regimes.

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Flagyl: the Story of a Pharmaceutical Discovery, J.A. McFadzean, Pp. 117, illustrated. Parthenon Publishing, Carnforth, 1986. £9.95.

Professor McFadzean, who has been intimately involved in the story of the development and evaluation of metronidazole tells the story very entertainingly. The tale is told for Everyman in plain English and with amusing anecdotes.

Metronidazole was developed, licensed and marketed as treatment for trichomoniasis. It was subsequently recognized to be active against other parasites, notably *Entamoeba histolytica* and *Giardia lamblia*. More interestingly, shrewd observation by a dental surgeon, Mr David Shinn, established the clinical effectiveness of metronidazole in at least one anaerobic bacterial infection, acute ulcerative gingivitis. This led to laboratory studies showing *in vitro* activity of the drug against virtually all anaerobes. At the time only a few enthusiasts considered anaerobic bacteria to be of great clinical moment. Improved techniques of laboratory recognition of anaerobes by culture or gas-liquid chromatography led to the realization that these organisms are the dominant flora of the intestinal and vaginal flora, and cause much of the harm when surgery in these fields is complicated by infection. Numerous clinical studies showed that metronidazole has a major part to play in the prevention and treatment of anaerobic sepsis.

The chain of fortuitous observations leading to clinical advance is reminiscent of the penicillin story. So is the single minded enthusiasm of several individuals inside the pharmaceutical company and outside who persisted in following up clinical and laboratory leads despite discouragement (at least) from on high. Anyone who has any interest in clinical research or drug development should read Prof. McFadzean's little book, a pleasure encompassed by this reviewer in a single evening. It has the character of a modern technological fairy tale.

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Lecture Notes on Rheumatology, John Edmonds and Graham Hughes. Pp. vii + 307, illustrated. Blackwell Scientific Publications, Oxford, London, Edinburgh, Boston, Palo Alto, Melbourne, 1985. £8.50.

This volume is a belated but welcome addition to the 'Lecture Notes' series and outlines the wide range of disorders found under the heading of 'rheumatology'. The clear, brief account of the HLA system and the major histocompatibility complex could be recommended to many postgraduates. The chapter on laboratory tests includes a table of disease associations with the more recently described antinuclear and anticytoplasmic antibodies which will be valued by many practising rheumatologists. However, the book is obviously aimed primarily at the clinical undergraduate. There is heavy competition between rheumatological 'primers' in this market. The brief telegraphic style will be popular with some and anathema to others. This text contains far more information than most undergraduates will require and the number and standard of diagrams and illustrations are a strong feature. I was fascinated to see that a majority of radiological illustrations came from the King Faisal Hospital, Saudi Arabia, thus subliminally excising the prejudice from students' minds that rheumatic diseases are peculiarly diseases of colder, damper climates! I enjoyed the X-ray and bone scan of spinal brucellosis. There are several points of detail to dispute. For example, I was surprised to read how often phenylbutazone is advocated whereas it should surely be reserved to rheumatologists for treating resistant spondylitis. Several anti-inflammatory drugs, for example, alclofenac and fenclozic acid, are listed yet never survived the Great Purge. They have no part in an undergraduate text. I find the best way to evaluate a brief rheumatology text is to see how it tackles a difficult subject like vasculitis. This book copes well and I have no doubt that many will turn to it as a relatively painless way to acquire the 'bones' of the subject. Inevitably, though, it communicates very little of the excitement of modern rheumatology.

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Medical Gynaecology, edited by M.C. Macnaughton. Pp. x + 272, illustrated. Blackwell Scientific Publications, Oxford, London, Edinburgh, Boston, Palo Alto, Melbourne, 1985. £19.50.

Standard textbooks of gynaecology have a distinctly surgical bias, with chapters arranged on an anatomical or pathological basis. The relative decline in the number of gynaecological specialists taking surgical fellowship and an increase in the number taking M.R.C.P. as a second qualification is a reflection of the growing recognition of the medical aspects of the specialty. Callam Macnaughton is therefore to be congratulated on his timely production of a book devoted entirely to the medical aspects of gynaecology.

The book is well produced and illustrated and not excessively expensive by today's standards. It consists of twelve chapters written by Glasgow specialists on topics which include amongst them family planning, termination counselling, well woman screening, genetic counselling and sex education. I do not recall seeing a chapter on sex education in any gynaecological textbook before, and this is a welcome innovation, although at times it is rather politically

motivated with remarks such as 'Governments should support health education', and 'not support adverse policies'. The useful chapter on termination counselling (euphemistically called pregnancy counselling) states that the average Health District with a population of 250,000 should expect 350 termination referrals per annum. The fact that my Inner London Health District carries out over 1,500 terminations per annum suggests we should be looking very closely at our health and sex education as well as the effectiveness of our Family Planning services.

There are excellent chapters on sexual dysfunction and genetic counselling which many gynaecologists will find helpful. The chapter on recognition and management of fluid retention is somewhat contentious both in regard to premenstrual syndrome and cyclical oedema. This is hardly surprising when one considers that people cannot even agree about the existence of these conditions, and treatment has been largely empirical.

The section on screening deals well with all aspects of cervical cytology but makes little mention of colposcopy, and it is disappointing that breast screening, ovarian and endometrial screening are not discussed at all.

The Preface states that the book is designed to give practical help to 'consultant obstetricians and gynaecologists, general practitioners and family planning doctors'. Some of the chapters such as those on infertility and sterilisation counselling, would be found very basic by consultants, and specialists in training (who are not mentioned in the Preface) would not find these chapters of sufficient detail and depth. My impression generally is that the book will be of particular use to general practitioners and family planning doctors, but some of the more surgically orientated among us would certainly benefit from a medical refresher. This is the first British book confined to medical gynaecology and I have a feeling that others will follow soon.

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Practical Prescribing, Martin J. Brodie and P. Ian Harrison. Pp. x + 295. Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh, London, Melbourne, New York, 1986. £14.95.

Cost-effectiveness is the criterion by which we are exhorted to evaluate new drugs, and it is not unreasonable to apply the same concept to our assessment of a book about drug prescribing.

This volume, says one of its authors, 'combines an educational approach with much practical material which the prescriber can consult when he has a problem.' Is it effective educationally? It begins with a section of pharmacological glossary, followed by sections on drugs of choice for common complaints and treatment policies, all in abbreviated short-note form, often using out-dated latin abbreviations. Tables follow of brief details on drugs, their side effects, interactions, cautions on their use, and their proprietary names. A detailed evaluation would be time consuming, but in a brief assay ketotifen was found to be described as a serotonin antagonist on one page and antihistamine on another. Cimetidine

and ranitidine are said to be excreted largely unchanged by the kidney in one table, and 50% metabolised in another. There is little, if any, important information in this book which is not readily available in the British National Formulary plus Prescribers Journal. Which brings us to the cost component of the criterion. Prescribers in the United Kingdom are already provided, without cost, with convenient sources of information, and it is difficult to see what this volume provides additionally which could reasonably be said to be cost-effective.

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Principles of Neurologic Diagnosis, Erwin B. Montgomery, Michael Wall and Victor W. Henderson. Pp. xiii + 286, illustrated, Little, Brown, Boston, Toronto, 1986. £13.70.

The authors encourage medical students to apply their knowledge of neurological anatomy and physiology to the analysis of a patient's history and physical signs at the bedside.

An introduction of transatlantic wordiness prefaces a series of 24 clinical cases constructed to span neurological presentation; 1. Weakness of the right arm and leg and numbness of the left arm and leg. 2. Right sided weakness and left gaze paresis etc. (the authors agree that the approach is somewhat artificial). The reader is led to translate physical signs into disordered neuro-anatomy with the help of line drawings (fairly clear but somewhat repetitious) and once the lesion has been sited from the analysis of signs a differential diagnosis and likely pathology are discussed. Occasional errors appear; the motor outflow from the nucleus ambiguus lies predominantly within the vagus rather than the glosso-pharyngeal nerve. The cost conscious trainee in the National Health Service may be irritated by the format; perhaps the frequent blank spaces are to inspire the student to his own illustration, anatomical or otherwise!

The book does offer a good deal of useful clinical information in an entertaining form so that it can be recommended to those starting or finishing their clinical course. This is not a comprehensive textbook of neurology to be purchased by students but rather a library text whose pages can be perused to introduce or revise the logic of bedside diagnosis. House officers beginning their tour of duty on the neurological or neurosurgical wards might benefit from reading this book and it could be scanned in a relaxed fashion on the train journey to the membership examination.

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