Manual of Clinical Blood Transfusion, Branko Brozovic and Milica Brozovic. Manuals Series. Pp. iii + 200, illustrated. Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh, London, Melbourne, New York, 1986. £9.95.

Not only is the practice of blood transfusion a dangerous pursuit, in recent years it has become also a very complex one. Transfusion of the 'wrong' blood, often with fatal results, is an ever present reality, and the recent AIDS scare is a reminder that even compatible blood or its products can have unforeseen disastrous consequences for patients. Thus it behoves all doctors both junior and senior to be knowledgeable of good transfusion practice, and this manual has been written to achieve this end.

On the whole, the authors have been successful in their task, particularly when tackling the various blood products available, platelet transfusion, acquired immuno-haematological disorders, and plasmapheresis. Unfortunately, in the reviewer's opinion, chapters are in the wrong order. The first chapter on red cell antigens will be very indigestible to most trainees apart from 'budding' haematologists. The practical chapters on the taking of blood, crossmatching and its administration would benefit from being at the beginning. There are annoying errors of fact, e.g. an anamnestic response is not synonymous with a secondary response, anti-D immunoglobulin does not contain anti $\bar{c}$, and the authors are often unnecessarily dogmatic in many of their statements.

In spite of these reservations, two junior doctors of my acquaintance found many of the chapters very helpful and clearly presented, and at the very reasonable price of £9.95 it should be a popular buy for many trainees, resulting in an improvement in their transfusion practice.

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Mathematical Methods in Medicine. Part II: Applications in Clinical Specialties, edited by D. Ingram and R.F. Bloch. Handbook of Applicable Mathematics Series. Guidebook 4. Pp. xxiii + 514, illustrated. John Wiley, Chichester, New York, Brisbane, Toronto, Singapore, 1986. £29.95.

This book, the second part of *Mathematical Methods in Medicine*, discusses mathematical techniques used in different medical specialties. The first part deals with statistical and other widely applied analytical techniques. Both parts aim to be a bridge between biomedical concepts and related mathematical techniques, the details of which are explained in the six companion volumes of the *Handbook of Applicable Mathematics*. This series gives a valuable review of the place of mathematics in medicine. Mathematical model building is only as successful as its foundations, the theory on which it is based. It is an essential tool with every day uses in areas with well-established scientific foundations such as lung function, renal physiology and imaging. In less well-understood areas such as oncogenesis, it has little practical use outside research. In this second part, such a wide spectrum of specialties is covered that explanation of both biomedical background and mathematical terms is limited. Thus, for the student of each specialty, a more detailed exposition limited

to that specialty would be more appropriate. No book written in the language of mathematics is easy to read, but for the mathematical enthusiast, this series will yield useful insights and ideas.

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Medicine for Examinations: a Streamlined Approach to Revision, R.J. Epstein. Pp. v + 390, illustrated. Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh, London, Melbourne, New York, 1985. £7.95.

This book has a strictly utilitarian purpose in attempting to organize the data base required for the different parts of the M.R.C.P. examination. This is done largely by means of lists. Each chapter covers a system and begins with several body diagrams labelled with points to be sought on examination of a patient suspected of having a particular disease related to that system, for example infective endocarditis or Cushing's syndrome. This is followed by lists highlighting aspects of clinical examination, investigation, management and of understanding disorders related to that system. The chapter concludes with a review of literature where 10, mainly recent, papers are cited and briefly annotated with the aim of indicating areas of controversy; should a candidate in an oral not have actually read the original paper he might at least be able to quote an authority for his views when questioned!

The obvious advantage of lists is that they can provide concentrated factual knowledge the recall of which is the main requirement of the 300 responses to the 60 M.C.Qs comprising the M.R.C.P. Part I paper. Lists, however intelligently compiled as they largely are in this book, invariably preclude discussion of controversies and tend to give equal emphasis to all items; the inevitable lack of explanation can also be frustrating. Therefore for the problem-solving approach required in the data interpretation and case history sections of the M.R.C.P. Part II paper and the subsequent long and short cases and orals in the clinical examination the format is less helpful.

The frequent use of often obscure eponyms to describe physical signs with no further explanation is particularly irritating, let alone the lack of any biographical note. Abbreviations however are well explained in a separate glossary. The index is frustratingly unhelpful and really needs to be displayed under major and minor headings (as could many items in the individual lists).

In any list of lists one can always point out omissions; such simple lists as Child's classification of liver failure or the features of normal and abnormal responses to the Valsalva manoeuvre are two that spring to mind.

If a need for such books exists, as it apparently does, this could be one of the better ones as its basic plan is sound.

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