favoured one diagnosis over other possibilities. Questions testing candidates' knowledge of the clinical aspects could then be asked separately.

The case histories are good enough for Dr Gupta to be encouraged to write another book but with a different formula for the questions and answers. These sorts of case study books are very useful in breaking the monotony of studying for the MRCP and this one is as good as the average.

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Chemical Children: How to Protect Your Family from Harmful Pollutants, Peter Mansfield and Jean Monro. Pp. viii + 199. Century, London, Melbourne, Auckland, Johannesburg, 1987. £4.95.

There seems only one way in which to review this book and that is, in a manner, philosophically. One may abide by the tenets of orthodox science. As Baum¹ has pointed out recently, 'The characteristic feature of the scientific method . . . is that scientists are prepared to expose all their favoured hypotheses to the hazards of refutation'. Judged by these criteria this publication will just not withstand criticism.

Whilst by no means questioning the integrity, or probity of the authors, *Chemical Children* reads very much as an act of faith and an essay in evangelism. If one shares the beliefs, then the exposition can be quite convincing. On the other hand, dispassionate criticism creates increasing doubts in the mind of the reader.

What a pity it is, too, that such an interesting title – and sub-title, should have been chosen for the little book! Plausible advocacy gains by eschewing the histrionic overtones. None the less, to a public already conditioned, this may afford persuasive reading. To the logically enquiring physician, on the other hand, it may bring to mind the Scottish verdict of 'non-proven'.

In the light of these options the choice of take-it-or-leave-it might be approached cautiously before spending the modest £4.95.

1. Baum, M. *J R Soc Med* 1987, **80**: 332–333.

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Clinics in Anaesthesiology. Vol 4, no. 4, *Anaesthesia and the Geriatric Patient*, edited by James A. Felts. Pp. ix + 251, illustrated. W.B. Saunders Co, London, Philadelphia, Toronto, 1986. £15.00.

This is an excellent book and is highly recommended. It is rare to find a book on practical anaesthesia so firmly based on the effects of anaesthesia on physiology, in this case physiology modified by aging. The chapters on the heart and respiratory disease detail the physiological changes which

occur with age and give sound advice on the avoidance of the additional stress produced by anaesthesia. The chapter on anaesthesia for cranial revascularization deals with the problems of the average age patient of 61, who is usually ASA Class 3, is frequently hypertensive and has both cardiovascular and respiratory disease. There is a good chapter on the loss of thermoregulation with age, including the harmful effects of hypothermia and how it can be prevented and treated. In the chapter on diabetes there is a detailed account of preoperative assessment and management. This chapter is a good guide to the management of the elderly diabetic whether or not he is to have an operation. The chapter on anaesthesia for major vascular procedures has a good section on preoperative assessment but would have been better if there had been more information on 'radionuclide gated blood pool studies' and 'thallium redistribution scans'. The section on anaesthesia for orthopaedic surgery includes Goldman's table for the assessment of cardiac risk factors but as the author correctly points out, patients need to be assessed as individuals and not according to a protocol. This humanitarian approach is very much to the fore in the chapter on anaesthesia for ophthalmic surgery, the commonest type of operation carried out on the geriatric patient. The chapter on hypertension in the elderly includes sections on pre-, intra- and postoperative management. The brief section in this chapter on the altered pharmacokinetics in the elderly could have been expanded.

If there is a weak part of the book it is at the end. The last two of the eleven chapters are by comparison not as good. This is due more to the standard which has been set earlier than any fault in the chapters themselves. They deal with outpatient anaesthesia in the geriatric patient and the 'Immediate and Long-term Nervous System Effects of Anaesthesia in Elderly Patients' (sic).

This book could be recommended only because it deals well with the combined effect of anaesthesia and age on normal physiology but it does more than this. It gives sound practical advice on the anaesthetic problems of an increasingly elderly population. Its publication is timely.

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Clinics in Haematology. Vol. 15, no. 2, *Thrombosis and the Vessel Wall*, edited by C.N. Chesterman. Pp. x + 273–565, illustrated. W.B. Saunders, London, Philadelphia, Toronto, 1986. £15.00.

This is an interesting and useful addition to the *Clinics in Haematology* series. Contributions cover a range of topics from arachidonate metabolism to the clinical use of anti-thrombotic drugs. Although the thrombotic nature of the main complications of atheroma is increasingly recognized, atheroma itself continues to be viewed by most as a purely lipid determined process. One particularly well referenced chapter (by Chesterman and Berndt) reviews the interaction between platelets and the vessel wall in its contribution to atherogenesis. Another (by Elspeth Smith) deals with the other main component of the haemostatic system in ath-