Book Reviews

Drug Treatment in Psychiatry, edited by Trevor Silverstone & Paul Turner. Pp. x + 282. Routledge, London and New York, 1988. £12.95.

This is now a standard text book already into its fourth edition in a subject of great importance. The first part of the book deals with the biochemistry of mental illness. This is in many ways an unsatisfactory subject because we clearly know very little of what actually happens to the brain in mental illness, so that there is much more in our knowledge that has to be conjectural than in most branches of medical physiology and biochemistry. Relatively little basic understanding is needed in order to learn to use the relatively few drugs that we possess in an intelligent fashion. This is particularly so since there has been no major advance in psychiatric drug treatment, except for lithium and depot neuroleptics, since 1959, by which time the earliest of each class of drugs that we use had been discovered.

There is an excellent chapter on the social and psychological aspects of drug treatment.

The second half of the book on clinical applications seems somewhat thin. Most of the knowledge in it should be observed by an SHO at the end of a 6 month job in an acute unit, and there is little in the book for senior registrars or consultants. There is an unusually good chapter on disorders of appetite and body weight, and the weight enhancing effects of most psychotropic drugs are given the importance they deserve.

I wonder if the book would be better if in future editions some greater detail is given about the growing points of the subject and if specific papers by specific authors are discussed. I would have liked to read more about new discoveries – is buspirone going to make it possible to cut down the prescription of benzodiazepines very greatly? How does one actually treat patients who are prepared in principle to come off benzodiazepines? Is carbamazepine as good as lithium for preventing affective relapse, or is it different? Do the two together wear better than when given separately? Is sulpiride going to be useful for negative symptoms in schizophrenia? Will fluoxetine really work in helping depressed patients who do not want to get fat without making them sick? I would have found it useful to have these and similar areas more critically examined.

M.J. Tarsh
*Bowden House Clinic,
Harrow-on-the-Hill,
Middlesex HA1 3JL.*

Dilemmas in Otorhinolaryngology, edited by D.F.N. Harrison. Pp. xii + 374. Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh, London, Melbourne, New York, 1988. £45.00.

On pulling this book off the bookshop shelf and flicking through the pages the reader could so easily be put off purchasing it. There is hardly a photograph or illustration in it to catch the eye. Sadly I feel the price will dissuade many from adding it to their personal collection. However, this book has been produced to last.

Professor Harrison has chosen 21 controversial topics

from across the range of otorhinolaryngology and asked at least two contributors to present a separate view on each topic. In addition a senior member of the specialty has been asked to write a short critique of the two views expressed. The contributors involved are from departments throughout the world.

Some chapters are masterful in their erudite differentiation between proven fact and dogmatic prejudice. Sadly such standards are not maintained throughout the book but the perceptive reader should have no difficulty in identifying the material from which to derive a reasonable opinion.

This is an interesting and successful attempt at demonstrating the dynamic process that leads to change within a specialty of medicine. It is well worth reading. I am sure it will sell well in America but it would not be my first choice for the ENT section of a hospital library in the UK struggling with a limited budget.

M.R. Hawthorne
*North Riding Infirmary,
Middlesbrough,
Cleveland TS1 5JE.*

Genital Tract Infections in Women, edited by M.J. Hare. Pp. x + 378, illustrated. Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh, 1988. £50.00.

This multi-author book will be a most welcome addition to the practising gynaecologist's reference collection. It really does cover the majority of genital tract infections in women very well indeed. It is divided into logical sections dealing with investigations, specific organisms and their treatment, and the effects and consequences of these disorders. Unfortunately, there are few references more recent than 1985 which is a pity as sexually transmitted diseases have changed considerably during the last three years. Human immunovirus and hepatitis are hardly covered at all, and although they do not cause lower genital tract problems, I think that fuller sections on these potentially disastrous diseases would have been beneficial to the book.

There are a few colour plates in the centre of the book but possibly the inclusion of a few more would have been helpful. However, my criticisms are minor ones and I do feel that this book is a most important addition to all library bookshelves and that it will help clinicians whose knowledge of many of these problems is often scanty and easily becomes outdated. At £50 the book is fairly expensive but it is nicely bound and the typeface is easy to read. I highly recommend it.

Linda Cardozo
*King's College Hospital,
Denmark Hill,
London SE5 9RS.*

Learning Physiology through MCQ, Mary L. Forsling. Pp. viii + 222. John Wiley & Sons, Chichester, New York, Brisbane, Toronto, Singapore, 1988. £8.95.

In this smallish book Mary Forsling presents the reader with