Book Reviews

AIDS — Principles, Practices and Politics, edited by Inge B Corless and Mary Pittman-Lindeman. Pp xvii + 252. Hemisphere Publishing Corporation, Washington (A subsidiary of Harper & Row Publishers Inc., Cambridge, New York, Philadelphia, San Francisco, London, Mexico City, Sao Paulo, Singapore, Sydney, 1989. Cloth £58.00.

This fascinating book is well balanced, unlike some other books with similar titles which have been commandeered by pro-gay activists. HIV facts are stated clearly, as are the past and present reactions of various individuals and groups.

All chapters are interesting and insightful; it is obvious that AIDS is the latest in a long line of epidemics, each of which has elicited moral and political reactions.

One chapter in particular 'The Malignant Metaphor, a Political Anthology of AIDS' (despite its awful title) presents an entertainingly ruthless perspective very different from the traditional 'gloom and doom' approach. AIDS has not killed 20–25 percent of the population (as did Justinian plague). Intravenous addicts ignore their high risk profession as effectively as those who work on scaffolding or undertake free-fall parachuting. Sports medicine is a speciality developed to cater for behaviour induced injury — why treat (or judge) HIV differently? The US sex industry seems to have shown some responsibility towards encouraging safer practices — certainly it has shown far more responsibility than the tobacco industry has ever shown, anywhere.

£58 for 252 pages is wondrously unrealistic. £58 could probably be better spent by individuals or institutions. The publishers must surely be aware that such pricing is an encouragement to photostat some or all of such books — an activity which is both immoral and illegal.

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Autonomic Failure, second edition, edited by Sir Roger Bannister. Pp.xv + 783. Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, Tokyo, 1989. £30.00.

This is a big book by any standards — weighing over 4 lb by my consulting room scales, and running to 780 pages. It is therefore not meant to be read as a general review of the subject of autonomic failure; but, as a reference work, it is invaluable. The first edition was published in 1983 and this second edition up-dates the subject including much new material on neurotransmitter function, imaging, evoked potential recording and other electrophysiological techniques.

Forty-two chapters are contributed by fifty-four authors but there is evidence of a firm editorial hand since there is remarkably little overlap between chapters. Sir Roger Bannister has contributed a number of key chapters including those on classification of autonomic failure, its clinical features, and investigations and management of postural hypotension. The scope of the book is wide and it provides a comprehensive review of all subjects related to autonomic failure.

In Part I the initial chapters are concerned with the structure and function of the autonomic nervous system, but although this part of the book deals with the more basic scientific aspects of the subject, their relevance to clinical medicine tends to be kept firmly in mind.

In Part II these clinical and pathophysiological problems are looked at in detail. The clinical consequences of autonomic failure are discussed and chapters are devoted to sleep apnoea, bladder and sexual dysfunction and the commoner disease states causing autonomic failure.

Finally, the third part of the book adds specific chapters on other diseases associated with autonomic failure — peripheral neuropathy, diabetes, alcohol and porphyria. There are also chapters on pain and sweating and the autonomic nervous system.

Throughout, the aim is to provide the clinician with information relevant to medical practice. Cardiologists, neurologists, geriatricians and general physicians will all find this a useful source of information. At £30.00 its price is modest by modern day standards but most will prefer to have access through their library rather than owning a copy themselves.

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Hutchinson's Clinical Methods, Michael Swash. Pp. xi + 618. Baillière Tindall, London, Philadelphia, Toronto, Sydney, Tokyo, 1989. £7.95.

This book first appeared over 90 years ago and has been one of the 'Standards' for clinical students ever since. It sets out to instruct in the methods of gathering clinical information, covering the history and physical examination, which now includes gynaecological and obstetric techniques, useful chapters on examination of children, the unconscious patient and sexually transmitted diseases, together with an over view of techniques for the special investigation of each system.

It is perhaps at its weakest in its coverage of these further investigations, not because of inadequate detail — an in-depth appraisal of every possible diagnostic test is not the purpose of such a book — but because of inappropriate emphasis which might mislead the student. For example, to a gastroenterologist it is strange to see several pages devoted to the examination of the faeces, including a large table on amoebiasis but no mention of intestinal overgrowth or any of the various breath tests used in gastroenterology. There is mention of something called the 'triple test' but not of tubeless tests of pancreatic function. Likewise, should a book aimed at '... students of all ages and all degrees of experience', be showing a succession of colour plates of blood films, marrow smears and cytology preparations whilst relegating pictures of urine microscopy, surely of more practical relevance, to the low-quality black and white images of the cheap text paper?

Most of the book is a pleasure to read, although the flow of the chapter on the cardiovascular system is interrupted by a set of intrusive and (to this reviewer) mind-numbing diagrams of haemodynamics, phono- and echo-cardiograms. Clinical details for the novice, such as what the common

cardiac lesions *really* sound like, appear to have been subverted.

Overall, however, the book succeeds in its aims and there is little to challenge it in its field. Perhaps McLeod and Munro's *Clinical Examination*, another excellent book, scores occasional points for its more down-to-earth clinical descriptions but the range of coverage, detail and astonishing value for money (over 600 pages) will mean that 'Hutchinson' remains the standard for all concerned with diagnosis in medicine. I would happily commend it to students and junior doctors training with me.

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Obesity in Europe 88, edited by Per Bjorntorp and Stephan Rossner. Pp. xi + 380. Illustrated. John Libbey & Co. Ltd., London, 1989. £30/US\$58/FF355/

Textbooks are often out-of-date when published but due to the editors' efficiency and modern technology, this book is an exception. Contained within is a synopsis of the more important work presented at the first European Congress on Obesity which took place in June 1988. There are 56 chapters subdivided into 10 sections spanning a wide area of current research interest including epidemiology, molecular biology, neurochemistry of appetite control, brown fat thermogenesis and obesity therapy.

The epidemiological section emphasizes the metabolic and cardiovascular risks of abdominal fat accumulation which interestingly is more prevalent in premenopausal women from Southern Europe compared with those in Northern Europe. A study of body weight gain averaged only 0.5 kg. There is much emphasis on the pathology of obesity with interest centred on the control of appetite and thermogenesis which hormonally appear to be counterbalanced. The possible important role of corticosteroids and especially corticotrophin releasing factor in obesity development are well reviewed. The regulation of adipose tissue development is becoming an important area of research especially with the discovery of adipisin, a protein which is markedly increased during adipocyte differentiation and which may be a marker for the genetic control of obesity. The use of recombinant DNA technology to investigate gene regulation of the uncoupling protein which produces thermogenesis in brown fat is also well described. For the clinician there are 9 chapters mainly concerned with atypical beta agonist thermogenic drugs and the newer anti-depressant anorectic agents. This book obviously does not encompass every new aspect of obesity but it is invaluable for those wishing a precis of the latest advances especially as it is so well referenced; beg, buy, or borrow a copy.

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Reviews on Immunoassay Technology, Volume 1 and Volume 2, Edited by S.B. Pal, Not illustrated. Pp: Volume 1 ix + 238; Volume 2 viii + 204. Macmillan Press, Basingstoke, Hampshire, 1988. £40.00 each.

This two-volume series contains 21 chapters contributed by a total of 53 authors and provides a wealth of information on a wide variety of topics related to immunoassay development and application. Immunoassay techniques included are enzyme immunoassay and 'ELISA', fluorescence (and particle counting fluorescence)-immunoassay, luminescence, spin label and liposome-label immunoassays. These techniques are coupled with studies on topics ranging from the detection of anti-drug antibodies to the biosynthesis of rat complement components and phagocytosis quantitation. Additional techniques covered include flow cytometry for 'polymorph' function studies. 'Western blot' analysis of herpes simplex virus proteins and non-isotopic labelling for the characterisation of the TSH receptor. Three chapters give timely reviews on the theory and practice of the production of human monoclonal antibodies by Epstein Barr virus techniques and their application to non-isotopic immunoassays.

The series has been written with emphasis on experimental detail, with good, critical comments on limitations and potential problems with techniques. 'Reviews on Immunoassay Technology' will be a valuable addition to libraries of service and research laboratories which use immunoassay techniques; the wide range of topics covered suggests that its information would be most helpful in libraries serving several departments rather than within a particular discipline.

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Study Guide and Review Manual of Human Embryology, by Keith L. Moore, Not illustrated. Pp xi + 247. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Kent. 1988.

Dr Moore's series of textbooks on human embryology are well known and have come to be much appreciated by medical students for their clear exposition and attractive presentation. This book falls into a different category. It consists of a series of exercises designed to test the knowledge of the student who is preparing for an examination and is built entirely around multiple choice questions. Sometimes the student is asked to select 'the one best answer', whilst at other times complex combinations of answers must be chosen. The objectives are set out clearly at the beginning of each chapter and probably fit in fairly well with those of most teachers of human embryology, though not all would demand such detail from their students. The answers to each question are easy to locate and are supplemented with explanatory details.

This book makes no concession to the fact that it is dealing with an interesting and exciting subject, and for that reason I shall not be recommending it to my own students. Apart from a few small line drawings it is innocent of illustrations. The object is to enable a cramming student to absorb a mass of