BOOK REVIEWS

The reviewers have been asked to rate these books in terms of four items: readability, how up to date they are, accuracy and reliability, and value for money, using simple four point scales. From their opinions, we have derived an overall "star" rating: * = poor; ** reasonable; *** = good; **** = excellent.

Anesthesia and Transplantation. Edited by Michael D Sharpe, Adrian W Gelb. (Pp 512; £95.) Butterworth Heinemann, 1999. ISBN 0-7506-9664-8. ****

The spelling of anaesthesia in the title hints at its Canadian/American origins. The editors are based in Ontario, Canada with the majority of the 63 contributing authors from the USA or Canada. The book is well written and thoughtfully assembled to give an overview of the last 50 years of transplant surgery and its problems. The book can be described in four parts.

The first five chapters introduce the topic with a summary of the history behind transplantation, the problems behind organ resources and consent for donation, declaration of brain death and the management of the organ donor, and an excellent chapter on mechanical devices as a bridge to transplantation. The second section consists of seven "how to do it" chapters dealing with the practical aspects of anaesthesia and surgery for all the major organ transplants. The third section of the book deals with the ongoing management problems of the transplant recipient with interesting chapters on the intensive care unit management of transplantation related problems, anaesthesia for the previously transplanted patient, immunosuppressive agents, and the management of infections. The book ends with an examination of the ethical and psychosocial issues and a glimpse into the future.

This book is an excellent and timely review of the methods available and current problems surrounding transplantation at the end of the 20th century. It will appeal to old hands in the field as well as trainee doctors who wish to develop an interest in transplantation anaesthesia or intensive care.

PAUL SPIERS
Consultant in Intensive Care Medicine and Anaesthesia, Leicester General Hospital NHS Trust, Leicester, UK

Instant Pharmacology. By Kourosh Saeb-Parsy, Ravi G Assomull, Fakhar Z Khan, Kasra Saeb-Parsy, Eamonn Kelly. (Pp 349; £19.99.) John Wiley & Sons, 1999. ISBN 0-471-97639-3. ***

This ready reference written by students for students is enthusiastic and contains attractively arranged information on chemical transmitters, pharmacological treatment of clinical conditions, a drug directory, and self assessment. The subject matter has been carefully chosen in such a way that the reader is directed to appropriate sources of further reading.

However it is not an instant formula for examination success in itself for several reasons. The length of the book has limited its

scope and necessarily eliminated important subject matter. A courageous attempt to cover basic principles has overshadowed mention of relative efficacy, while adverse reaction sections are sketchy and no indication is given of their incidence. It is therefore not possible to form a view of the balance between efficacy and safety, between relative risk and clinical usefulness.

Although the book has significant limitations, the authors may already have made plans to improve it in the next edition. Other short sections could also be usefully added on pharmacognosy, principles used in the conduct of clinical trials, ethics of drug treatment, drug interaction, and incompatibility and pharmacoepidemiology.

Provided that this book is used as a ready reference in pharmacological information terms, it will be appreciated by students as a good place to start gathering information on an individual topic. It is attractively written and presented and may also be useful to those engaged in other disciplines such as nursing and complementary medicine.

C D M DREW
Richmond, Surrey, UK

Drugs in Anaesthetic & Intensive Care Practice. 8th Ed. By M D Vickers, M Morgan, P S J Spencer, M S Read. (Pp 526; £55.) Butterworth Heinemann, 1999. ISBN 0-7506-3727-7. ***

It has taken a long time for the 8th edition of this well known anaesthetic textbook to be published. It has been used by anaesthetists taking their fellowship exams for many years and it is therefore welcome to have an up to date version. This edition contains recommended international non-proprietary names and all the new drugs used by anaesthetists, which have come into use over the last few years. The book also has changed to specifically include intensive care both in the title and in the content. The chapters on cardiovascular drugs and antibiotics have therefore undergone considerable revision to reflect this change.

There is a difficulty with producing a pharmacology book for a particular specialty, as there are a number of problems with the classification of the drugs—whether they should be grouped together as drug families or by their application in anaesthesia. This is an insoluble problem, which leads to a number of inconsistencies and this makes it impractical to use on its own. However, the monographs themselves are as succinct and useful as ever and the section on general pharmacology is well written, easily understood, and contains all the essentials for anaesthetic practice. Many anaesthetists and trainees will find this book very useful.

A G H COLE
Consultant Anaesthetist, Glenfield General Hospital NHS Trust, Leicester, UK

Fundamentals of Cardiovascular Pharmacology. By G D Johnson. (Pp 347; £75 hardback/£34.95 paperback.) John Wiley & Sons, 1999. ISBN 0-471-97013-1 hardback/0-471-85471-9. ***

This textbook of cardiovascular pharmacology uses a novel approach in educating its reader in this field. Pharmacology textbooks all too often concentrate on basic science which, once learnt is all too quickly forgotten and not utilised in the day to day practice of

medicine. The author, however, has combined these basic principles with a practical approach to patient management.

On the whole, this has been successfully achieved although in parts, by necessity, the separation of pharmacokinetic and pharmacodynamic data from clinical decision making leaves the reading of the text a little disjointed.

As pointed out in the introduction of the book, research and publications within the field of cardiology have provided more evidence to the practice of medicine than any other specialty. While mentioning some of the relevant trials within the text, I would like to have seen at least landmark trials referenced at the conclusion of the appropriate chapter.

One problem with textbooks published within a rapidly changing field, such as cardiovascular therapeutics, is that they are often outdated at the time of publication. The author should be congratulated on providing an up to date textbook giving helpful and relevant information on some of the more recent developments such as the use of glycoprotein IIb/IIIa receptor antagonists and direct anti-thrombins.

While not providing a comprehensive review of each aspect of cardiovascular therapeutics, I would recommend this textbook as valuable reading for physicians, cardiologists, and a useful reference source for allied professionals and medical undergraduates.

L PENNY
Consultant Cardiologist, University of Wales, Cardiff, UK

Cardiovascular Therapeutics. By R Haiat, G Leroy. (Pp 346; £29.95.) Manson Publishing Ltd, 1999. ISBN 1-874545-002-8. ***

Cardiovascular therapeutics over the past 10 years has produced multiple trials in every area of cardiology. The results of these trials have not only fundamentally changed the practice of cardiology but has resulted in the greatest reduction in mortality perhaps seen in the annals of clinical medicine. It is extremely difficult for any one individual to keep abreast of all these trials and therefore this particular book highlighting the main points of the major clinical trials is essential reading to all those involved in everyday clinical practice. The authors, senior cardiologists and directors of their respective departments with Professor Haiat the current President of the French Society of Cardiology, are eminently suitable from their great authority to analyse the major recent clinical trials. They therefore have covered the fields of hypertension, stable and unstable angina, myocardial infarction, lipid abnormalities, chronic heart failure, atrial fibrillation, and venous thromboembolism and heart valve prosthesis.

In a succinct way they have drawn together the differences and common aspects of major clinical trials highlighting the most important aspects and the unresolved issues still outstanding in clinical medicine. They emphasise what may be deemed to be best medical practice. Needless to say this book will become dated as more trials are published and I note this book only is as recent as the trials published until 31 December 1998. Therefore some of the major trials presented in 1999 are not analysed in the microscopic way these authors have digested the various trials.

This is an extremely easy book to read, presented in a very systematic fashion, and I can warmly recommend it to all those involved in clinical cardiology. This book therefore helps the clinician to confirm what he already knew but also it confirms those aspects which need to be examined in the future. Not only will clinical cardiologists gain greater insight into their practice from this book but the pharmaceutical industry in general should use this as a guideline to their future thoughts on trials.

D J COLTART
Consultant Cardiologist/Clinical Director,
Cardiothoracic Unit, St Thomas' Hospital,
London, UK

DIARY

The British Library

13 June 2000: Sources of healthcare information (a one day training workshop)

18 July 2000: Biomedical information on the internet (a one day hands-on training workshop)

Details: The British Library, St Pancras, London NW1 2DB (contact Maureen Heath, tel: +44 (0)20 7412 7470, e-mail: maureen.heath@bl.uk, web site: www.bl.uk/services/stb/courses.html).

23rd European Conference on Psychosomatic Research

17–21 June 2000: Oslo, Norway

Details: Congress-Conference AS-CONGREX, Thomas Heftyes gt 2, PO Box 2694 Solli, N-0204 Oslo, Norway (tel: + 47 (0) 2256 1930; fax: + 47 (0) 2256 0541; e-mail: ecpr2000@congrex.no).

Falk Symposia

9/10 June 2000: Cholestasis and gallstones (Cluj Napoca, Romania)

1/2 October 2000: Non-neoplastic diseases of the anorectum—an interdisciplinary approach (Freiburg, Germany)

3/4 October 2000: Immunosuppression in inflammatory bowel diseases—standards, news, and future trends (Freiburg, Germany)

12/13 October 2000: Biology of bile acids in health and disease (Den Haag, The Netherlands)

4 November 2000: Chronic inflammatory bowel diseases—progress and controversies at the turn of the century (Bucharest, Romania)

Details: Falk Foundation eV—Congress Division, Leinenweberstr 5, PO Box 6529, D-79041 Freiburg, Germany (tel: +49 (0) 761 130340; fax: +49 (0) 761 1303459; e-mail: symposia@falkfoundation.de).

Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons, New York

28–31 July 2000: 10th Annual course. A comprehensive review of movement disorders for the clinical practitioner

30 July–5 August 2000: 5th Annual course. Update and intensive review in internal medicine

Details: Center for Continuing Education, Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons, 630 West 168th Street, Unit 39, New York, NY10032, USA (tel: +1 212 781 5990; fax: + 1 212 781 6047; e-mail: cme@columbia.edu).

Ninth International Symposium on celiac disease

10–13 August 2000: Hunt Valley, MD, USA

Details: Althea Pusateri, Program Coordinator, University of Maryland School of Medicine, 655 W Baltimore Street, Baltimore, MD 21201, USA (tel: +1 410 706 3957; fax: +1 410 706 3103; <http://www.celiaccenter.org>).

Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh/Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain (Scottish Department)

16 June 2000: Appropriate antibiotic prescribing

Details: Ms Eileen Strawn, Symposium Coordinator, Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh, 9 Queen Street, Edinburgh EH2 1JQ, UK (tel: 0131 225 7324; 0131 220 4393; e-mail: e.strawn@rcpe.ac.uk).

Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh/Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network

3 November 2000: Symposium on clinical effectiveness, clinical guidelines and clinical standards

Details: Mrs Anne Fairbairn, Coordinator for Research and EBM, Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh, 9 Queen Street, Edinburgh EH2 1JQ, UK (e-mail: a.fairbairn@rcpe.ac.uk).

Imperial College School of Medicine, Division of Paediatrics, Obstetrics and Gynaecology

27 June 2000: Caring for sexuality in health and illness (for healthcare professionals and nurses)/jointly with Association of Psychosexual Nursing

29 June–1 July 2000: New horizons in recurrent pregnancy loss.

5 July 2000: Bereavement

6–7 July 2000: Advances in obstetric medicine: international meeting of obstetric medicine societies (satellite to ISSHP, Paris)

Details: Symposium Office, Imperial College School of Medicine, Queen Charlotte's and Chelsea Hospital, Goldhawk Road, London W6 0XG, UK (tel: +44 (0)20 8383 3904; fax: +44 (0)20 8383 8555; e-mail: sympreg@ic.ac.uk).