
Books received


New editions


Nutrition and its Disorders


From a global point of view diseases due to malnutrition must be the major cause of illness and premature death. Most doctors however are trained in well-fed societies and nutrition plays little part in undergraduate curricula. Professor McLaren’s book is aimed primarily at medical students and could help enormously in redressing the balance.

In the first place, it eschews the lists of foodstuffs and their nutrient values which can make textbooks of nutrition so unappetizing. Secondly it is written by someone who is clearly familiar with many of the nutritional diseases he is describing, and the wider social, cultural and economic implications. (Professor McLaren is at the American University, Beirut.)

The book is divided into four sections. The first is concerned with normal nutrition and considers body composition, food, and nutrient physiology, metabolism and requirements. The second section deals with primary nutritional disorders of both under and over-nutrition. The third section is perhaps the least satisfactory covering general medical conditions that affect nutrition and others, including rare metabolic disorders where dietary management is of value. The fourth section deals chiefly with the assessment of the nutritional status of communities. One can take exception to a number of statements related to general medical problems. Perhaps the cost of vitamin B12 in Beirut determines the low doses recommended in the treatment of pernicious anaemia!

However this book can be heartily recommended for the students for whom it was written and also for their seniors including their teachers. The author and publishers are to be congratulated on providing such good value for money.

Book reviews

Parenteral Nutrition


In spite of its title, this book is not a comprehensive review of the subject but contains the thirty odd papers presented at an international symposium held in London in 1971. The papers are concerned with both the practical aspects of intravenous feeding as well as with experimental work.

There is now a wide range of commercial preparations of nutrient-containing fluids available for safe intravenous feeding. The literature and promotional films of some of these excellent products sometimes fail to point out the very real problems outstanding in this therapeutic area. The occasional user of parenteral nutrition may not be aware of this. This book is of special value in highlighting areas of controversy and uncertainty. But to get the message, the reader must be sure to read each chapter on any one topic. This is especially noticeable with the papers on calorie provision with glucose, fructose, sorbitol, xylitol and ethanol. Thus xylitol proves to be one man’s ‘best buy’ and another man’s poison.

Several other papers are concerned with the requirements and utilization of amino acids and proteins. There are helpful tables giving electrolyte, vitamin and calorie requirements of adults and children, although the range of metabolic status amongst any groups of patients requiring parenteral feeding means that the values can only be used as guidelines in individual patients. There is less to read on the use of fat solutions and the question of whether or not they are needed is not really tackled. The complications of intravenous feeding, notably thrombophlebitis and infection, are discussed.

The references at the end of each chapter add to the value of this book but more uniform editing with a summary for each chapter would have been helpful.

All those regularly using parenteral nutrition should find this book invaluable. The occasional user should also have access to a copy—and use it.