Books received


Book reviews

A Clinical Approach to Progress in Infectious Diseases

The title of this book could be misleading but its contents are not. It contains the proceedings of a 1-day meeting held at the Royal Free Hospital in London in 1983 in honour of Dame Sheila Sherlock prior to her retirement from the Chair of Medicine at that hospital.

There are eight contributors including Dame Sheila who gives a masterly review of the prevention and treatment of hepatitis type B. This is followed by a paper on the role of the liver in the handling of antibiotics and another on the treatment of biliary tract infection. Professor Milton Salton from the Department of Microbiology of the New York University School of Medicine gives a most interesting account of the structure and function of mammalian and microbial cell membranes with particular reference to understanding of infectious disease and the strategy of antimicrobial chemotherapy. Kass's essay entitled 'Should bacteriuria be treated?' is written in his usual provocative style. The remaining three contributors are on risk factors in animals, infective granulomas and the diagnosis and treatment of respiratory tract infections.

The essays in this book are well written and informative. The Editors are to be congratulated on producing it within 6 months of the meeting at which the papers were read.

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Critical Care of the Obstetric Patient

This book is primarily about maternal intensive care in acute obstetric catastrophes, and acute illness such as asthma which may affect pregnant women. It is written by a team of authors, many of whom come from Mount Sinai Hospital New York, and all of them come from the eastern United States. Inevitably, suggested therapy is biased towards American practice. For example, the drug of first choice that is cited for acute asthma is isoetharine (Numotac), a beta agonist that is very little used in the United Kingdom. But the subject matter is very widely covered in 561 expensive pages. There are chapters on specific problems such as sepsis, blood volume replacement and acute hypertension emergencies, and also on specific techniques such as the use of the Swan Ganz catheter. I was concerned that venous thromboembolism, the leading cause of maternal mortality in the United Kingdom, is only mentioned within a chapter on respiratory disease in pregnancy.

Because some of the writing is so non-committal, I wonder just how much experience some of the authors have in the topics on which they have written. But perhaps the intensity of American litigation makes authors too nervous to be dogmatic. I suspect that the book had a long gestation period, because some recent references are missing.

In conclusion, this is an essential book for the departmental libraries. It cannot be recommended sufficiently for individual purchasers to justify the very high price.

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Current Therapy in Infectious Disease, 1983–1984

The therapy of infectious disease is becoming increasingly complex as a result of the discovery of hitherto unrecognized infections plus the constant flow of new antimicrobial agents. In few, if any, fields of