ision'. In the meantime, MRCP candidates and higher flying senior medical students would find it valuable and the US Resident in dermatology with his pocket full of 'strong' dollars, would find it hard value to beat. I am not giving my review copy away.

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How to Live with Diabetes, Henry Dolger and Bernard Seeman. British edition revised and adapted by Colin McIntosh. Pp.176. Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, New York, Victoria, Markham (Ontario). Auckland, 1984. £2.50.

This book is a pot-pourri of different perspectives on diabetes: metabolic, endocrinological, dietary, historical, anecdotal and apparently mythical. Its discussion ranges from the inter-relationships of ACTH, cortisone, growth hormone, somatostatin, glucagon and insulin, to consideration of the race-related, age-related prevalence of diabetes. Along the way, we learn that the 'Bedford Survey estimated that there are 200 000 000 diabetics in the world', that as well as MODYs (Maturity Onset Diabetes of Youth) there are JODYs, and that 'Eskimos seem to lack the chromosomes for both diabetes and asthma'. Though such varied information may be of differing reliability and veracity and, perhaps, of questionable value to many patients, it is all presented in a refreshing style with a tone lacking the patronizing quality often evident in patient information booklets.

Although the book disclaims the role of a do-it-yourself manual, chapter 7 lists the species of origin and time courses of 25 different insulins and the following chapter provides an 18 step procedure for how to inject yourself. There is a chapter on the historical development of diabetic diets with a lively discussion of the nature of emaciation regimes (in use until 1920s) including the suggestion that some patients died of starvation from the fasting and purgation and the imposition and 'metabolic Sundays' (pray and starve days).

I particularly enjoyed the sections on Science vs Dogmatism and Diabetics Resist Extreme Diets. These may well flesh out the skeletal intuitions of some patients that doctors may not have all of the answers all of the time. By way of confirmation chapter 9 sketches the controversial conclusion of the UGDP Study on the detrimental effect of the use of tolbutamide on mortality. This book is unusual in

presenting medical knowledge, practice, understanding and facts to patients as provisional and historical.

Finally, there are chapters on the complications of diabetes (but curiously only the acute ones) and on the special problems of childhood, adolescent and woman diabetics. Amidst this panoply of diabetic issues and there is no mention of the social class distribution of the condition nor of the role of 'lifestyle' factors in the aetiology of Type 2 DM. The role of the British Diabetic Association as a patient organisation that provides local support groups as well as a collective identity and public image is also sadly absent.

This is surely meant to be a source book of information for the individual patient so that she (all patients and doctors are male) may be better equipped to appreciate all the implications of the disease and its therapy. With a good index but no glossary, diagrams or references it presupposes considerable familiarity with scientific and medical terminology. It is a mine of facts, figures, historical interpretation and medical opinion embedded in a firm scientific optimism.

The last chapter entitled 'On the Threshold of Tomorrow' considers the role of insulin receptors, pumps, islet cell and pancreatic transplants and the artificial pancreas and provides a resoundingly affirmative answer to the question posed on the very first line of the book: 'Will I live?' Answer, yes with our help.

Although the book advertises itself on the front cover as 'The famous book that has helped thousands of diabetics and their families' I wonder what sort of patients would derive most help from a book so studded with information and diversions. I think it should be cautiously recommended to diabetics voraciously hungry for more knowledge, to be taken with a large pinch of fibre. Many doctors with less of a diabetic hunger will both enjoy and learn much from dipping into it.

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The Liver and Biliary System. Aids to Higher Medical Training Series, P.W. Brunt, M.S. Losowsky and S.E. Read. Pp.247, illustrated. William Heinemann Medical Books, London, 1984. £7.95.

This is the first of a series of 10 *Aids to Higher Medical Training* to be published by Heinemann. *The Liver and Biliary System* is a mini-textbook of hepatology and as such succeeds very well. The book is comprehensive,