
The best medical teaching is received on the wards. A good teaching ward-round can impart more knowledge than many hours spent in the lecture theatre. Unfortunately once a clinician has obtained his necessary qualifications, he is no longer exposed to this form of teaching, except possibly from his juniors or at hospital clinical meetings. Many become set in their ways, practising the medicine they were taught years before and often perpetuating the errors. Conventional textbooks cannot correct this problem but a clinician’s vademecum might, and this is what ‘Essential Clinical Medicine’ edited by R.H. Slater attempts to be.

Each of the nine chapters in this ‘bench-book’ is written by an individual specialist about the common problems he encounters. The style is similar to that of a ward-round and the somewhat sketchy illustrations reminded me of those drawn by consultants on the backs of temperature charts. They are certainly easier to understand than many of the illustrations in conventional texts.

It will be interesting to see whether this book reaches a second edition. Its rather uncritical repetition of the given truth is however suitable for medical students or MRCP Part II candidates in the weeks prior to their orals and clinicals. The occasional error (fig. 6.3) can be forgiven, but I do feel that the treatment recommended for malignant hypertension (page 15) would cause more cerebral damage than it prevents.

As a mainstream account of contemporary British medicine as practised in the wards of a busy hospital, this volume can be recommended; whether any consultants or principals in General Practice ever read it is, sadly, uncertain.

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This book is based on the proceedings of a symposium on the subject held in Cannes, in 1983. Over 70 contributors from Europe and America presented details of their experience of the pathology, pharmacology and management of endometriosis. The editors and publishers are to be congratulated on the prompt publication of this volume which incorporates a large amount of previously unpublished data relating to the use of new drugs in the management of endometriosis. Not surprisingly there are a few chapters devoted strictly not to endometriosis but to related subjects such as the use of Gestrinone as a contraceptive agent or the study of peritoneal fluid in infertile women.

The book is in four sections. The first section deals with the pathophysiology and principles of treatment of endometriosis. Interesting information concerning genetic factors in endometriosis is presented, for example, endometriosis in Turner’s syndrome (xo) or in the male (xy). Conclusions drawn from data presented concerning the relative merits of medical vs. surgical treatment, can be questioned on their scientific basis.

The second section deals with hormonal and biochemical control of endometriosis and the modifying influence of therapeutic administration of steroids and related agents. The role of various forms of steroid receptors is also discussed. The third section deals with pharmacological and clinical aspects of management with Gestrinone, danazol and related steroids. The fourth and final section deals with the initial experience of an LHRH analogue (Buserelin), followed by a general discussion of the principles of treatment of endometriosis. I found the discussion to be of more interest than some of the papers presented in the book.

There is a distinct bias towards pharmacology, biochemistry and cell biology rather than to clinical problems. Modes of action of various hormones on ‘receptors’ in endometrium and in endometriosis have been reported in some detail. Gestrinone is described as a progestogen (p. 131) and an anti-progesterin (p. 134). This apparent contradiction, whilst factually correct, deserves further explanation. Detailed pharmacokinetics of Gestrinone are presented. However, clinical studies on the same compound relate to only a small number of patients from three centres. In all fairness, these clinical studies are more of the nature of pilot studies rather than details of in-depth experience. The comparative trial of danazol vs. surgery can be criticised for being retrospective, non-randomised and uncontrolled. As Gestrinone and Buserelin are not yet commercially available in the U.K., the appeal to the readers will of necessity, be limited.

This book will, I hope, prove to be a source of information and reference to biologists, pharmacologists and research workers. The clinician will have his appetite stimulated by the diversity and variety of drugs used for the treatment of endometriosis. The clinician may, however, be disappointed at the lack of details concerning the clinical use of pharmacological agents in the management of endometriosis. The book
is not cheap. It is likely to be an excellent reference book for the library. I cannot see the clinically-orientated gynaecologist rushing to acquire a personal copy.

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This is the first of a series which hopes to provide clinically orientated reviews of new and developing areas of transplantation, as well as covering more established areas. In this volume there is no central theme in the choice of the nine review articles written by recognised authorities. A short, but interesting, historical review of immunosupression is followed by an excellent description of cyclosporin. The current status of bone marrow transplantation is discussed and in another section the difficulties of using monoclonal antibodies is documented. The chapter on CMV is particularly useful, whilst the consideration given to donor specific transfusion is indeed a balanced view. The combination of flow cytometry and specific antibodies for monitoring immunological activity is interesting, but has yet to stand the test of time. There is a clear description of the two types of lymphoproliferative disorders that can occur after transplantation, and a chapter on multiple organ harvesting – which may increase the awareness of the need for other organs for grafting but generally, is a subject best learnt by example.

For this series to be valuable, it must be up to date and in general this is achieved with a plethora of references for 1983 and some for 1984. The index is adequate, the text clear, the book small and the price high.

The book achieves its object of broadening the horizons of practicing scientists and clinicians involved in specific areas of transplantation. The high price and built-in obsolescence of being so very topical make it an unlikely acquisition for individuals, but is an essential volume on the shelves of any transplantation unit library.

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Continued practice at eliciting physical signs by the patient's bedside, preferably under the guidance of senior colleagues, is probably the best way to increase confidence and correct faults while preparing for the clinical section of MRCP. A book, however well written, cannot substitute for this. Nevertheless this is an interesting addition to the myriad of books now available to the membership candidate. In ten chapters each covering a major system the author gives a synopsis of the physical examination for membership together with general advice and estimates of the probability of cases appearing in the exam. Turning to the section on thoracic medicine I was surprised to find that only pleural effusion and chronic bronchitis were listed as 'common short cases' whereas bronchial carcinoma, bronchiectasis and fibrosing alveolitis were all grouped as 'rare short cases'. I wonder how useful the reader will find this classification. The presentation is in general clear and the book can be read quickly. It starts with a well written chapter on the nervous system (47 pages); in contrast the sections on the cardiovascular and respiratory systems (together 31 pages) appeared a little elementary for a postgraduate book. The bibliography is sparse and, for example, does not include Dr Bickerstaff's excellent book 'Essentials of neurological examination'. Nevertheless at the very reasonable price of £4.50 this is a book that can be recommended to the candidate for MRCP – much of it is good and the indifferent sections can be quickly passed over.

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This textbook of haematology is now in its sixth edition. Clearly it continues to please its readers. It is now some 50 pages longer and the bulk of its 518 pages are devoted to red cell disorders. While these are covered adequately, white cell disorders are less generously provided for, but haemostasis is dealt with most inadequately. Indeed, haemolytic anaemia