nevertheless practically useful clinical diagnosis. Throughout the book there is a heavy leavening of orthodox immunological theory, with pointers to other mechanisms which may play a role, such as idiosyncratic metabolic defects, toxic additives.

The introductory chapters are a collection of well written articles on various aspects of mucosal immunology. The authors have gone to a lot of trouble to exhaust the information banks on their topics, as in the 20 page chapter (with 96 references) on gut-associated macrophages, by Bockman. Despite this wealth of information, the author had to admit in the conclusion to '... the paucity of our detailed knowledge about the role which macrophages play in food intolerance ...'. For those whose physiology is rusty there is an excellent chapter on gut function by Mallinson in this section.

Later come interesting chapters on mucins by Clamp and lectins by Freed. Are these the missing links in the mechanisms which so many doctors (particularly among the contributors) believe are causing their patients' food dependent symptoms? Although expounding the theoretical potential, neither author reported evidence supporting abnormalities of either mucin or response to lectins in patients with food allergy or food intolerance. Wright and Robertson do a service in drawing together many of the non-immune mechanisms by which substances in food cause gut damage.

The four chapters in the section 'Examples of Foods as Allergens' are illustrative of the varied approach in the book. Jean Monro is short on science and long on advice in her chapter about rotational diets, with appendices which are a food faddists dream. Gerrard presents both orthodox and unorthodox views of cows' milk allergy, while the chapters on fish and egg white allergy, by Aas, are models of scientific exposition.

The third section of the book deals with end organ effects. This covers many of those clinical states in which the connection with food allergy is tenuous, to say the least. In discussing the mechanisms involved, in the first chapter of this section Jonathan Brostoff rightly points out that the cornerstone of the diagnosis of food sensitivity is clinical – the response of the patient's symptoms to specific dietary manipulation. Beyond the well-known and accepted Gell and Coombs classification of immunological hypersensitivity, the abnormalities of metabolic pathways mentioned are all hopeful but as yet unproven explanations of why some patients become clinically ill after ingesting certain foods. The introduction of assorted data about disturbances of immune function in psychological states is presumably to lend credibility to the proposition that food intolerance can lead to behaviour disturbance, and conversely, that patients with psychological problems and stress may more easily develop food sensitivity to compound their symptoms. Among the chapters in this section are a number which cover various neuropsychological disturbances, arthritis and renal diseases, all attributed to food sensitivity. It would be true to say that most of the claims in these sections are controversial.

This volume must have been a nightmare for the indexer since there is much repetition of ideas. Many authors quote their own or other workers' suggestive but incomplete data in support of these ideas. There is a section on the APICH syndrome (Autoimmune, Polyendocrinopathy Immune dysregulation, Candidiasis, Hypersensitivity) by Saifer and Becker which links occult autoimmunity with allergy in a

novel manner. The section on the diagnosis of food allergy is also covered by many authors presenting various ways of detecting this such as by exclusion diets, laboratory tests (including IgG4 antibodies), food challenges intradermal tests. Treatment and prevention are covered in four relatively short chapters, again with a mixture of orthodox methods such as avoidance and symptomatic pharmacotherapy to somewhat unorthodox regimes of transfer factor administration and hypersensitisation.

This is a book in which there is something for everyone which is why it will undoubtedly find its way onto the shelves of many departments with an interest in nutrition, immunology, allergy and much else besides. The editors have interpreted Sir Peter Medawar's dictum about seeking to make the world a better place, by not excluding those with whom they disagree, and recognising that many patients have benefited symptomatically from both orthodox and more controversial approaches to this topic. However for the critical scientist this mixture can be somewhat unpalatable. At £75.00 it is more likely to be a departmental than an individual investment.

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Geriatric Anesthesia: Principles and Practice, edited by C.R. Stephen and Richard A.E. Assaf. Pp. viii + 376, illustrated. Butterworths, Boston, London, Durban, Singapore, Sydney, Toronto, Wellington. 1986. £39.50.

This book is edited by two anaesthetists and has 22 other contributing authors; 11 of these are not anaesthetists but are geriatric experts. The stated aim of the book is 'to explore the ageing process – how it occurs, how it affects specific organ systems – and examine ways it may influence clinical care when a patient is subjected to an operation'. The book has 15 chapters; the first 8 are devoted to the basic science of the ageing process and the remainder to the specific problems these processes create for the anaesthetist. It is unfortunate that the basic scientists and the anaesthetists ignore each other's contribution – the first mention of anaesthesia is on page 97 at the beginning of chapter 4. The editors have not co-ordinated the book at all and as such it is a collection of essays. The comment of R.G. Merin at the beginning of chapter 10 aptly describes the limitations of the book. 'If only the direct effects of anaesthetics on the ageing heart were to be considered in this chapter, then the text would be considerably shorter than what follows, because such studies are virtually non-existent.' This book highlights the paucity of scientific data on the ageing process as well as the lack of well controlled studies of the effect of anaesthesia on the elderly. Apart from indicating a need for research in this area it has very little to offer the clinical anaesthetist.

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