Book Reviews

ABC of Aids, edited by M.W. Adler. Pp. 57, illustrated. British Medical Journal, London, 1987. £9.95.

One implication of the ominous statement in the introduction that 'the best we can hope for is a slowing down of the epidemic' is that most clinicians will need a comprehensive basis of AIDS information. Does the 'ABC of AIDS' provide this?

There are sixteen chapters, each as originally published in the *British Medical Journal* in 1987. The chapter format is not that of the 'classical scientific paper' but that of the informative magazine article. The tables are all appropriate and summarise information from diverse sources, lucid diagrams enable the reader to grasp concepts in addition to the information therein, and the clinical photographs are superb. All are positioned appropriately in the relevant text, the style of which is of a sustained high standard implying strong editor-led teamwork. Overall a masterpiece of presentation.

However, it would be less than honest not to remark that the readership of a book (even though published by the *British Medical Journal*) will be much wider than that of the same series of articles published in the *British Medical Journal* and that readers of the book will have expectations, implicit in the title, of a more comprehensive treatise. As it is the book reflects the London base and experience of the medical authors, predominantly of male homosexual AIDS. Health care workers based elsewhere will require a more comprehensive approach including problems of HIV infection in intravenous drug abusers, in females, and in children: non-British readers would benefit from an account of the international position, especially as certain parts of the world have different epidemiological patterns of AIDS. A brief historical account would have been useful for paramedical and interested non-medical readers, who will undoubtedly be attracted to this book.

In summary this book provides a valuable source of easily accessible information which will be particularly valuable for clinicians who have only occasional involvement with AIDS patients. Even accepting the criticisms above, this book is highly recommended and should be in every medical library.

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ABC of Hypertension, edited by D.G. Beevers. Pp. 52, illustrated. British Medical Journal, London, 1987. £4.95.

The publication of a second edition of this book, within 2 years of the 5th impression of its first edition, testifies to its appreciative public. It started in the format of a series of articles in the *British Medical Journal*, and is aimed to provide, for the non-specialist physician and the general practitioner, a 'safe main stream approach to hyperten-

sion'. It does this admirably. Since hypertension is being managed increasingly in general practice, because of screening programmes and earlier treatment, this new edition should be in the hands of all general practitioners. Most hospital physicians will also find it valuable.

The first section of the book, by Eoin O'Brien and Kevin O'Malley, concerns blood pressure measurement. This draws proper attention to the various sources of error, especially the inappropriate cuff size. Specific recommendations are made and justified for the use of the silent end point (phase 5) for diastolic pressure recording, except in pregnancy.

The main section of the book, on indications for and methods of treatment, is by Gareth Beevers and M.R. Wilkins, and follows conventional lines. Proper stress is laid on reduction of weight and of salt intake. As one might expect, Dr Beevers, who has published important observations on the hypertensive effects of alcohol, specially emphasizes the importance of reducing alcohol intake. For drug treatment ACE inhibitors and calcium antagonists join thiazides and beta-blockers as 'first line' drugs - though I would like to have seen some mention of their very considerable extra cost. A country-wide switchover to these drugs will result in yet more hospital beds being closed, and needs more justification at the present time. The complications of and contraindications to the various drugs are discussed fully in a useful section entitled 'Special Problems', and recommendations made for the inpatient management of malignant hypertension and for the special needs of the elderly. The section on hypertension in pregnancy might have given some advice about the use of drugs during breast feeding, since this is a frequent query.

The final section of the book, contributed by a number of authors, and covering detection and investigation, follows conventional lines. I do not agree with the proposition that 'All patients should have a plain radiograph of the chest and an electrocardiogram', even though most clinics do this. Both investigations are expensive, and coarctation of serious degree is unlikely to be missed (or, indeed present) in the middle-aged and elderly; the evidence of cardiac enlargement in chest X-ray or of LV hypertrophy on ECG only becomes important when hypertension is borderline. However, these are minor points, and the authors and editors are to be congratulated in producing an excellent, sensible, well set-out and edited book at a very reasonable price.

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Aids to Urology, by D. Badenoch. Pp. 115. Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh, London, Melbourne, New York, 1987. £5.95.

This is an excellent book of its type. It is written in note form and packs in a wealth of facts in a short space. The lists and headings of which the book is composed provide a framework to be filled in by the reader with information drawn from other sources. Most urological subjects are