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

covered, although diseases of the scrotal contents (with the exception of testicular cancer) hardly get a mention. I looked in vain for information about urodynamics in a chapter entitled Urodynamics/Incontinence. Intracavernosal injection therapy for erectile impotence deserves to be included. The chapter on spinal injuries could be expanded to describe neuropathic bladder in general. Urological malignancies, trauma, lower tract obstruction and stones are dealt with admirably. The index is excellent for a book of this size. Most students could afford to buy this book and I recommend it as an aid to revision for both qualifying and subsequent examinations.

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Anatomie Pathologique Generale, Second edition, J. Diebold, J.P. Camilleri, M. Reynes and P. Callard. Pp. 352, illustrated. Editions Médicales Internationales, Paris, 1986. Ffr. 198.00.

This is the second edition of a book that has become a standard work both for medical students and catechumens in morbid anatomy as well as any francophonic medical practitioner wishing to keep up with advances in pathology. It is written by men who are at the forefront of French pathology and who are renowned as teachers: this is reflected in the clarity and concise composition of the text.

The book has been produced cheaply in the interests of student pockets and speed of production but loses very little nevertheless in comparison with many a more glossy tome. It is remarkable in the way it covers all essential current knowledge for the understanding of pathology in a succinct yet readable style, so much so that it would be worth translating into English as an adjunct to those books on general pathology available in Britain except that it does not comprise the necessary microbiology for the British general pathology undergraduate course. Any English medical reader with a competent knowledge of French, however, should find the text readily easy to understand.

Chapter headings, not surprisingly, follow the classical format but with emphasis on fields of topical importance: chapter 3 'Inflammation' and chapter 4 'Notions d'immunopathologie' account for almost a third of the total. Although only some 40 pages are devoted to 'Pathologie circulaire' all the essential aspects of this important subject are covered. These three chapters together with 'Pathologie tumorale' account for three quarters of the total volume which is about right. Given the usefulness of this concise tome, it is surprising that the index is so perfunctory – the only major criticism of this noteworthy work.

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Clinical Microbiology. Sixth edition, by E.J. Stokes and G.L. Ridgway. Pp. xi + 338, illustrated. Edward Arnold, London, 1987. £19.50.

When I started in medical microbiology, I obtained a second-hand 1953 1st Edition 'Joan Stokes' and used it for many years. The 3rd Edition helped me through my MRCPATH examinations, and it has been a source of helpful information in the years since then. The 6th Edition, with the addition of Dr Ridgway to the authorship, adds to the book's stature and will be welcome to new generations of medical microbiologists.

As Sir Ashley Miles stated in the 1st Edition 'Dr Stokes insists a little on the academic approach'; a glance at the new edition shows that this continues, yet the whole book is, in essence, extraordinarily practical.

The book is organized in a logical fashion with the general principles of medical microbiology taking up the first four chapters, with sections on how to take specimens, their processing and what the results mean. This is then followed by a very concise chapter on 'Identification of Bacteria' where in some 60 or so pages the various tests used to differentiate bacteria of medical importance are discussed. It would be easy to pick holes in the author's choice of media, etc., here – but rather churlish – this subject is open to individual preference and long may it remain so. The following chapter on parasitology is both precise and comprehensive. The two sections on antibiotic therapy show the laboratory bias of the book, namely the control of sensitivity testing is admirable (as one would expect from the pedigree of this book) but the section on the application of this knowledge to practical situations is scant.

All in all, the most commonly recurrent thoughts on reading this book must be that it is comprehensive and concise and so it must appeal to all starting a career in medical microbiology. It will form a thoroughly sound foundation for them.

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Current Surgical Practice. Volume 4, edited by John Hadfield. Pp. x + 309, illustrated. Edward Arnold, London, 1987. £20.

This is the latest in a series of reviews, initiated in 1976, and based on lectures given at the Royal College of Surgeons by acknowledged experts. The topics chosen extend across the broad spectrum of surgery and as such are designed primarily for the surgical trainee embarking upon fellowship examinations. The intention is for the reviews to be as up-to-date as possible and most achieve this.

The topics covered include orthopaedics (knee instability, backache, painful joint replacement and spinal injuries), arterial surgery, head injuries, coronary artery surgery, transplantation, urinary tract stones, screening