Book Reviews

Diseases of Infection - An Illustrated Textbook, N.R. Grist, D.O. Ho-Yen, E. Walker & G.R. Williams. Pp. xv+455, illustrated. Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, Tokyo, 1988. £15 (paperback).

The title of this book sets the precedent for what is to follow (most so-called infectious diseases textbooks of course include non-infectious infections) but these authors have defined with clarity the remit and content of this book from the outset.

There are three main sizes of textbooks - small (information with little comment), medium (including information and comment), and large (usually including everything conceivable about the subject in question). To write a successful medium sized book must be the most difficult because the authors have to be selective. This book is a perfect example of a medium sized textbook and the authors are to be congratulated upon the sustained quality of selection and presentation displayed throughout.

Nineteen chapters cover nearly all clinically relevant aspects of all infections. Some textbooks of infection comprise chapters which tediously document all the possible effects that individual *organisms* can produce. The authors have eschewed this more expeditious approach and have their clinical chapters deal with *syndromes* based on the anatomical site of infection: this of course is the way that patients present and is the only sensible way to teach clinicians. The risk of such an approach is the possibility of information duplication which has obviously been avoided in this book by foresighted planning.

There are numerous high quality colour illustrations which, remarkably, are nearly always within the text which refers to them. As is customary Koplik's spots fail to reproduce adequately!

There are chapters dealing with infection and the laboratories, infection in the tropics, prevention of infection, epidemiology in action and, unusually and usefully, illnesses occurring *after* acute infections. The specific drug treatment of pathogens is commendably succinct and relevant with the principles and practice outlined adequately: details of dosages are omitted but then small or large textbooks can always be consulted for the details!

The book is up to date as one can expect within sections on AIDS, Lyme disease, Reye's syndrome, and post-viral syndromes.

At this stage of a review it is almost traditional to express surprise at the cost of the book being reviewed and this review is no exception. I express surprise, bordering on shock, at the price of this book. £15 for 446 pages with numerous colour illustrations is unbelievable value (and incidentally calls into question the pricing of nearly all other textbooks). At this price there can be no question that this must be the textbook of choice for both undergraduates and 'early' postgraduates.

P.D. Welsby
Department of Infectious Diseases,
City Hospital, Greenbank Drive,
Edinburgh EH10 5SB.

Heart Disease, Earl N. Silber. Pp. xiv+1922. Macmillan Publishing Company, New York, Collier Macmillan Canada Inc, Toronto, Collier Macmillan Publishers, London, 1988. £95.

The second edition of this textbook in cardiology, amounting to some 1,922 pages has to be carefully considered in the market place of cardiological publications. The pace of advancement in modern cardiology is so rapid that the general reader and specialist can only keep abreast of current knowledge by modern day journals or rapidly published monographs. The second edition of this textbook, published in 1987, the first having appeared in 1975, suffers from the common criticism of major textbooks, namely that they are out of date by the time they are published. The original edition had a dual authorship of the present author Dr Silber and Dr Katz. The present edition has been updated by Dr Silber recognizing the great contribution of the late Dr Louis Katz.

The author in his preface carefully makes note that this textbook has resisted the temptation to multi-authorship incorporating all the expertise within the speciality, but suggests that a place exists for a less comprehensive presentation directed specifically towards day to day problems confronting the average cardiologist. This therefore, is a textbook directed to the middle of the road cardiologist, and in consequence, must have a limited attraction in a speciality which has seen major advances. This would be a reasonable reference book, for what one would recognize as the type B cardiovascular physician. There is little mention within this textbook of the rapidly advancing role of thrombolysis therapy, the advantages of angioplasty, the newer advances in paediatric cardiology and coronary artery by-pass surgery, and also in cardiac transplantation and heart and lung transplantation.

The chapters of this textbook cover the traditional aspects of heart disease in a very sound, fundamental and easily digestible fashion. At the end of every chapter there is a reference section which unfortunately is very outdated in relation to modern references. Furthermore, the illustrations, although excellent in many parts, suffer greatly in other aspects. As a general criticism, the ECGs would not be acceptable in any modern cardiological journal.

At £95, I believe this textbook would have a limited circulation. It clearly will be considered secondary to other major textbooks of cardiology, which are cheaper than this tome, and also those which have multi-authorship have greater authority in modern day cardiology. However, to those who wish to practice sound, fundamental, clinical cardiology, there are many attributes within this book which are worthy and commendable as a reference book to the wealthy cardiologist's library.

D.J. Coltart
St. Thomas' Hospital, London, SE1 7EH.