the editorial decision, made perhaps in the interests of economy, to eschew photographs and X-rays in favour of sometimes turgid verbal descriptions of endoscopic, radiological and histological appearances. More line diagrams might have helped here, as well as in the explanation of processes such as digestion, absorption and the enterohepatic circulation. Lastly, for a first edition, I noticed remarkably few errors – a low sodium diet contains rather more than 20 nmol Na/day (p. 3), lactulose is not primarily a motility stimulant (p. 43) and angioneurotic oedema is not due to cholinesterase deficiency (p. 364)!

Some people like to learn their medicine from 101b multi-author tomes covering all the subspecialties. For those who prefer more compact, single-subject texts, this excellent book can be thoroughly recommended.

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Parasitic Infections of Pregnancy and the Newborn, edited by Caroline MacLeod. Pp. viii+308. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1988. £35.

A minimum of 150 million births take place every year. Eighty five per cent of these are in developing countries where standards of environmental hygiene tend to be less than ideal and parasitic infections are commonplace. Therefore an enormous number of women of childbearing age are obviously being exposed to such parasitic infections and it is clear that the special risks to them and their infants are insufficiently well understood. This is especially noticeable in relation to preconceptual and interconceptual care and the appropriate use of drug therapies.

To remedy this dearth of both reference and practical resource information, Dr Caroline MacLeod has herself either written or co-authored ten of the fifteen chapters, in addition to being the inspirer and overall editor. The book is thus the outcome of her interests over a number of years in tropical medicine and maternal and child health. It displays her genuine concern for better understanding of the significant parasites involved, better educational and preventive programmes, and better management and treatment based on further research and allocation of resources. Her other contributors are all eminent and experienced. The book is clear, concise and consistently presented – with a strong clinical emphasis on maternal, fetal and neonatal effects of the parasite in each instance and how these should be treated. There is an excellent first chapter about recognizing parasitic infections in pregnancy, a useful penultimate one about the pregnant traveller; and a taut conclusion about prevention which stresses the value of an intersectoral approach for success with all maternal and child health programmes at community level.

The AIDS picture is given in all its complexity as background to the important role played by parasites as opportunistic infections in women and children with HIV infection. But even without AIDS, pregnancy is a time of increased risk to mother and new-born from parasitic infections and this book should interest obstetricians,

gynaecologists and paediatricians, as well as specialists in infectious disease; it also supplements general textbooks of tropical medicine and parasitology extremely usefully and is particularly recommended for people planning to work overseas, including medical students on electives in MCH. Final note: it will please her many admirers to see that Dr MacLeod has so appropriately dedicated this excellent book to Dr Cicely Williams.

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Pathophysiology of Heart Disease, edited by N.S. Dhalla, P.K. Singal and R.E. Beamish. Pp. xiv+376, illustrated. Martinus Nijhoff Publishing, Boston, Dordrecht, Lancaster, 1987. £56.50.

This book contains a number of scientific papers concerning selected aspects of heart disease presented at a meeting devoted to fundamental cardiac research. For the clinician, the value of such publications is in allowing one a glimpse of present fundamental research and possible future developments in our understanding of heart disease and its treatment. At the very least, to read such a book will enable one to understand better the jargon and the scientific thought behind future research and advances in therapy, and at least one word which was new to me, 'Luistropic' may well become a buzz word over the next few years. The word refers to those substances which enhance the relaxation of cardiac muscle just as inotropic drugs enhance its contraction.

The book commences with an excellent review by Arnold Katz of some clinically important aspects of cardiac physiology, many of which are dealt with in greater detail later in the book. This introduction could be read with advantage by all cardiologists, but inevitably many of the later papers are more specialized and therefore of less immediate interest, as well as being less easily understandable.

This is a book for cardiac departments to have in their library, rather than for individual cardiologists to buy. Cardiologists in training and those of their seniors who retain some intellectual curiosity should be encouraged to read it.

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Practical Problems in Medicine – Childhood Asthma, edited by Anthony D. Milner. Pp. vii+148, illustrated. Martin Dunitz, London, 1987. £29.95.

This small book gives a first class account of essential knowledge for all dealing with childhood asthma. The author has presented a distillation of fact, hypothesis, and guidelines for management in a form which is a pleasure to read. The ground covered includes underlying mechanisms of wheeze, the relationship between genetic predis-