

Book Reviews

Antibiotic Minicomputer 'IDEA'. Designed by P.D. Welsby (from whom copies are available), The City Hospital, Edinburgh EH10 5SP.

This is not a minicomputer in the currently accepted sense. It is a sliding card indicator with two faces, each of which has a window in which infected conditions or syndromes can be made to appear by moving the middle card of the sandwich. Some of the syndromes are relatively precise (bacterial meningitis in children) while others are less so (septicaemic syndromes). The outer face in which these 19 different syndromes can be made to appear consists of a table familiar to microbiologists in which organisms listed alphabetically on the left produce a matrix with 16 antibiotics listed in columns above; it is possible to read off the antibiotics which are 'most reliable', 'moderately reliable' or 'not usually used' against the organisms in the rows. The sliding card picks out the organisms most commonly associated with the clinical infected syndromes and there, in colour, in the columns, are the antibiotics which may be useful.

The reverse face contains details of dosage, administration and availability of the antibiotics and a code for selecting combination therapy as well as the clinical condition which one has selected for; there is a reminder of the need for culture results to guide therapy, grading of the second choice antibiotics and those which are valuable in neonatal conditions.

This then is neither a book nor a minicomputer but an easily used *aide-memoire* for initial best guess antibiotic therapy of the conditions listed; a list of antibiotics which may not coincide with local policies (and includes clindamycin) may be thought somewhat inflexible but with three cephalosporins, ciprofloxacin, amoxycillin, and clavulanic acid and an ureido-penicillin it offers a wide ranging prompt for the 19 conditions most of which are acute (but strangely includes subacute endocarditis) and the infected organisms causing them. Overall this is a very useful aid for the white coat pocket.

M.W.N. Nicholls
*Department of Microbiology,
St Richard's Hospital,
Chichester,
W. Sussex PO19 4SE.*

Baillière's 'Clinical Immunology & Allergy', edited by D. Doniach & G.F. Bottazzo. Pp x+250. illustrated. Baillière Tindall, London, Philadelphia, Toronto, Sydney, Tokyo, 1987. £17.50.

It is 30 years since Doniach and Roitt's observations on thyroid autoimmunity. The field has developed rapidly with major contributions in our understanding of human autoimmune disease continuing to come from the Middlesex Hospital group. The editors of this book have collected together a number of groups eminent in the

field, many of whom have worked directly under the editors in the past, or been influenced by them. The twelve chapters of the book provide an update on the relevance of autoimmunity to the endocrine diseases, and diabetes particularly, and highlight the contribution which immunofluorescence has made to the demonstration of a wide spectrum of autoantibodies.

Modern concepts such as the inappropriate expression of HLA Class II antigens on the target cells of endocrine tissue are reviewed and the contributions which animal models, immunogenetics, monoclonal antibody production and T-cell cloning have made to the field are highlighted. The concept of patients producing a spectrum of autoantibodies which have the capacity both to stimulate and block function and growth is elegantly presented and the extension of these original observations to other endocrine diseases elegantly described. The remaining 5 chapters concentrate on specific disease states and highlight the contribution which autoimmunity may make to their development.

The book is succinct, but well written and up to date. Little is made of the developments of our understanding in autoimmunity which have emanated from characterization of the relevant autoantigens, or of the contribution of molecular biology to our understanding of the T-cell receptor and the relevance of the T-cell receptor to autoimmunity. A book of this size, however, cannot hope to cover everything and certainly within the confines of the material covered, the book provides an excellent State of the Art analysis on endocrine autoimmunity. It is essential reading for anyone working in the field and would certainly provide an excellent introduction for those wishing to enter it.

Professor A.M. McGregor
*King's College School of Medicine
and Dentistry,
Bessemer Road,
London SE5 9PT.*

Essentials of Endocrinology. Second edition, edited by J.L.H. O'Riordan, P.G. Malan & R.P. Gould. Pp xii+276, illustrated. Blackwell Scientific Publications, Oxford, London, Edinburgh, Boston, Palo Alto, Melbourne, 1988. £11.95.

The first edition of this excellent book was published in 1982, and was re-printed twice. A second edition is now necessary after six years, because of major advances in endocrinology. These have been made in molecular biology and chapter one is a clear and concise summary of the endocrine system and the molecular basis of hormone action. There are clear accounts of the ways in which genes are expressed, and the molecular biology of recombinant DNA technology. The revised chapter on reproductive endocrinology includes an account of inhibin and activin, and artificial induction of ovulation. Other