Book Reviews

Handbook of Blood and Blood Products, S. Ghosh, Pp. ix + 117. Macmillan Press, Basingstoke, Hants, 1988. £25.00 (hardback), £9.95 (paperback).

In recent years we have witnessed an 'outbreak' of small manuals on clinical blood transfusion, which has been needed to bridge the gulf between the scanty guidelines published by HMSO and large reference manuals. This is the latest and can be commended for its concise and practical approach. The author has adopted a straightforward though rather simple and dogmatic style and has purposefully kept theoretical information to a minimum. The text is very readable, is logically divided and complemented by useful tables.

Following a brief introductory chapter on the essentials of immunohaematology, each component is described, the rationale and indications for its use are given and contraindications are mentioned. No component is omitted but one is surprised to see that heparinized blood and fibrinogen concentrates are included since neither has been recommended nor available for several years.

Specific chapters are then devoted to the ordering and administration of blood components, transfusion in special situations, neonatal transfusion and adverse reactions. The information given is basically sound but in certain areas lacks appropriate emphasis. For example, parenterally transmitted non-A, non-B hepatitis receives no more attention than Chagas' disease, the importance of preventing hypothermia during massive transfusion is dismissed.

The author's aim was to provide junior medical staff with a convenient handbook on the practical aspects of blood transfusion. In this, he has succeeded. However, since the manual was not designed to provide a sound and concise understanding of the discipline, candidates for MRCP and FRCS would do better to look elsewhere.

S.M. Knowles
*National Blood Transfusion Service,
Deansbrook Road,
Edgware,
Middlesex HA8 9BD.*

Books Received

Alimentary My Dear Doctor, Clifford Hawkins. Pp. xii + 140. Radcliffe Medical Press, Oxford, 1988. £4.95 + 60p postage and packing.

Anatomy of Epileptogenesis, B.S. Meldrum, J.A. Ferendelli & H.G. Wieser. Pp. vii + 187, illustrated. John Libby & Co., London, Paris, 1988. Hardback £24.00.

Annual Review of Microbiology, edited by L. Nicholas Ornston, Albert Balows & Paul Baumann. Pp. x + 794. Annual Reviews Inc. California, USA, 1988. \$34.00 (USA & Canada): \$38.00 (elsewhere). Price includes postage and handling.

Diagnostic Cytopathology, Chandra Grubb. Pp. 214, illustrated. Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh, London, Melbourne, New York, 1988. £29.50.

Computing for Clinicians, Tim Chard. Pp. viii + 136, illustrated. Elmore-Chard, London, 1988. £18.00, \$32.00.

In many ways, this is a really excellent book. It is only 130 pages long, relatively cheap, and very readable. Basically, it sets out, chapter by chapter, what an ordinary clinician should know about computers. The chapters on the use of computers in medical administration and on computers in medical diagnosis are really well done and put clearly in a few words what many books put in tons of jargon and incomprehensible waffle. Only rarely does the author sink into the computer writer's usual error of initializing and jargonizing his English. The use of tables is a little odd in that many tables are full of words, but this is only a minor criticism. I don't think the publisher has helped very much with the figures either, which have been set out in a rather boring way, using a rather boring typeface.

I think that this book purports to be suitable for doctors with no knowledge of computing (and it may well be so), but I believe it would be more useful to the clinician when the clinician has had a year or so of experience getting things wrong with computers. Then, to turn to this book I think would be an enormous step forward for that person, and help them to go on to higher things. I must say that, even though I have been working in this area for about 6 years, it still helped me to clarify a number of areas about which I was confused.

Professor Chard has written an excellent, small book. Any clinician who is keeping up with the 20th century and knows a little about computers should read this.

F.R. Vicary
*Whittington Hospital,
St Mary's Wing,
London N19 5NF.*

Perfecting the World, A.M. Kass & E.H. Kass. Pp. xxx + 642, illustrated. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Boston, San Diego, New York, 1988. £24.50.

Reproduction, Obstetrics and Gynaecology, M.G. Elder. Pp. xiv + 333, illustrated. Heinemann Medical Books, Oxford, London, Melbourne, Auckland, 1988. £20.00.

Student Psychiatry Today, Robert I. Cohen & Jerome J. Hart. Pp. viii + 478. Heinemann Medical Books, Oxford, London, Melbourne, Auckland, 1988. £17.50.