

## Book Reviews

**Antenatal and Perinatal Causes of Handicap**, N. Patel. Pp. x + 240. Baillière Tindall, London, Philadelphia, Sydney, Tokyo, Toronto, 1988. £15.00.

In an era when defence subscriptions for obstetricians are reaching stratospheric proportions this slim volume is certainly timely. It brings together a group of distinguished European contributors from the fields of obstetrics, epidemiology, neonatology and neurology to review current data on the relationship between antenatal and perinatal events and longterm disability. In 15 short but heavily referenced chapters it covers the entire field ranging from the known genetic causes of neurodevelopmental impairment, through to the use of noninvasive screening techniques in the neonatal period to predict long-term outcome.

Although it undoubtedly provides an authoritative overview of the state of current knowledge I found this book rather difficult and at times confusing to read. There are all the usual problems of multi-author textbooks with some wearisome repetition and unevenness of style. On several occasions there seem to be overt disagreements on matters of fact between contributors. I would have welcomed much more in the way of editorial comments and analysis. It is all too apparent that the rapidly expanding literature is beset by lack of agreement over terminology, poorly designed and controlled studies and frankly conflicting results.

As an overview of the current state of knowledge in a complex and rapidly expanding area this book has much to offer. However I found it also a cautionary reminder of how little in the way of assured results a large amount of scientific endeavour has produced.

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**Crofton and Douglas's Respiratory Diseases**, 4th edition, A. Seaton, D. Seaton & A.G. Leitch. Pp.1215. Blackwell Scientific Publications, Oxford. £79.50.

This splendid textbook is a Scottish heavyweight champion. Scottish because it was born in style in the Department of Chest Diseases, Edinburgh University, and heavyweight because it weighs several pounds. John Crofton and Andrew Douglas were the original midwives and they should be proud of the fact that it has reached a commendable fourth edition. They and the publishers have given the present authors a free hand to rewrite what is now an international classic. There are new chapters on clinical pharmacology, cystic fibrosis, drug-induced diseases, and on lung disease in the immunocompromised host. The sickle cell syndrome has been incorporated into a chapter on the lung in systemic disease, and there is a short chapter on the management of terminal illness. This means that there is something for everybody in this voluminous textbook, for the chest physician, of course, but also for the general physician,

paediatrician, radiologist, pathologist and haematologist. It is a most informative reference source for every discipline which has an interface with pulmonary disease. Indeed, each of the 45 chapters could be regarded as a small compact monograph in its own right. For instance, the chapter on drugs used in respiratory disease occupies 77 pages and has 500 references. The chapter on pneumonia is 160 pages long and has 527 references. And this sets one wondering whether 527 references on pneumonia are really necessary and whether 478 references are needed on lung cancer. Could this be an Achilles heel which will need correcting in the fifth edition? The 264 references on sarcoidosis are far too many for some of these references are over 40 years old and have been replaced and cancelled out by more recent ones which are also included. One suspects that the new authors inherited Crofton and Douglas's references of yesteryear without ruthless pruning with the result that this excellent textbook is loaded with 2469 references. A very helpful new chapter, which had not been inherited, is only supported by twelve references and they are quite sufficient. With fewer out-of-date references the fifth edition could be one pound lighter in weight, a few pounds cheaper and more manageable on one's lap. But ruthless pruning for the next edition should not detract anyone from the present edition. This is British medicine at its best and is strongly recommended in the world market of medical textbooks.

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**Instructions for Patients**, 4th edition, H. Winter Griffith. Pp. xiii + 369. W.B. Saunders, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Sidcup, Kent, 1989. £31.95.

This is not a book as such. It is however a vast tome covering 325 topics from A to X, i.e. from abdominal pain and suspected appendicitis to an X-ray examination questionnaire. This is followed by pages of illustration, e.g. sinus cavities and male genital organs.

Each topic is on a pull-out page which is then photocopied and handed to the patient to read at his leisure, e.g. when enduring the distress of acute pericarditis or when examining the soles of his feet for changes in pigmented areas in malignant melanoma! I cannot imagine many of my patients with suspected appendicitis taking 'rectal temperatures every two hours and keep a record to bring with you at the time of your next appointment', but then this is a book for American doctors and their patients.

It is essentially a teaching aid, but whether it should be taken to such extremes as in this issue is doubtful. To my mind, it cuts across the whole style of the British general practice consultation. This book is no substitute for doctors and patients talking to each other. There are patients who will always look up books to see what is wrong with them but handing out leaflets is not the answer. The difficulty about producing leaflets for patients is in finding the right level of communication. Some of these sheets might help our better

informed patients but would be a source of worry and indecision for our less intelligent patients.

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**On Call Principles and Protocols**, Jean Gillies, Shane Marshall and John Ruedy. Pp xxi + 330. W.B. Saunders Company, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., Sidcup, Kent, 1989. £12.95.

This Canadian hand-book places in order of priority the problems faced on call and suggests questions to ask on the telephone, orders for the nurse, 'elevator thoughts' to pursue on the way to the patient and subsequent selective history, examination, investigations and management.

The aims of this book must therefore seem admirable to the new house officer, who is shown how to deal with the numerous calls about patients falling out of bed, acute shortness of breath, blocked central lines and so on. The authors also discuss the level of urgency of each case and how to manage each situation without involving full history, examinations and investigations.

I certainly found the book useful in offering a structure to use when faced with such problems. It is also very reassuring to be told that many tests *can* wait until the morning and conversely which situations are urgent, deserving immediate attention.

However, I did not find the chapters on patient problems as concise or readable as they should be in a practical hand-book of this nature. Moreover, the details are often inappropriate for British doctors: CT scans are *not* readily available here, and suggested requests to the nurse to insert cannulas and cross-match blood for example, are also inapplicable since British junior doctors perform these roles themselves. Inevitably the drug names also need translation.

Nevertheless, this book does offer a useful approach to on-call problems and as such fills a gap in the education of junior doctors.

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## Books Received

**AIDS – Principles, Practices and Politics**, edited by Inge B. Corless and Mary Pittman-Lindeman. Pp xvii + 252. Hemisphere Publishing Corporation, Washington. A subsidiary of Harper & Row Publishers Inc., Cambridge, New York, Philadelphia, San Francisco, London, Mexico City, Sao Paulo, Singapore, Sydney. 1989. Cloth £58.00.

**Clinical Epidemiology and Biostatistics**, Michael S. Kramer. Pp xii + 286. Springer-Verlag, Berlin, Heidelberg, New York, London, Paris, Tokyo, 1989. Price not given.

**Rush University Review of Surgery**, Steven G. Economou, Steven D. Bines, Daniel J. Deziel and Thomas R. Witt. Pp xviii + 426. W.B. Saunders, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Sidcup, Kent. 1988. £16.95.

This book is designed, rather ambitiously, as a revision guide both for medical students and advanced surgical trainees about to undergo higher professional examinations. It was developed by the surgical faculty of Rush University Medical School in Chicago from regular weekly revision sessions with general surgical residents. Throughout the course of a five year residency programme structured reading of two major surgical textbooks (Sabiston's *Textbook of Surgery* and Schwartz *Principles of Surgery*) resulted in the development of M.C.Q. questions for each 20 pages of text.

The book is divided into chapters corresponding to each textbook and consists of appropriate M.C.Q. questions, with not only the answers but also comments following each question. The most important aspects of the book are the comments which attempt to amplify the correct answers and explain away the incorrect ones. In this regard the book succeeds in providing a comprehensive revision exercise for the two textbooks concerned. Although the two texts may not be the most popular for UK surgical trainees nevertheless the questions, answers and comments provide a most useful basis for structural revision and should enhance an individuals ability to cope with tricky M.C.Q. questions. On reviewing the individual chapters and questions I was impressed by the clarity of the comments and by a lack of disagreement with most of the answers provided.

I am sure this book will find more favour during the building up to F.R.C.S. examinations rather than with undergraduates although with 426 pages of revision provided for £16.95 both groups may benefit.

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**Dorland's Pocket Medical Dictionary**, 24th Edition. Abridged from *Dorland's Illustrated Medical Dictionary*. Pp xviii + 668. W.B. Saunders Company, Philadelphia, London, Toronto, Montreal, Sydney, Tokyo. 1989. £12.50.

**Family Medicine: Principles and Practice**, 3rd Edition, edited by Robert B. Taylor. Associate Editors: John L. Buckingham, E.P. Donatelle, Thomas A. Johnson, Jr. and Joseph E. Scherger. Pp xxxviii + 743. Springer-Verlag, New York, Berlin, Heidelberg, London, Paris, Tokyo, 1989. Price not given.