Book Reviews

Electronic Fetal Heart Rate Monitoring – A Practical Guide, Paul L. Wood and H. Gordon Dobbie. Pp. viii + 86, illustrated. Macmillan Press, Basingstoke, Hampshire, 1989. £18.95 (Hardback) – £8.95 (Paperback).

Antenatal intrapartum cardiotocography has become one of the most used fetal screening tests of the Western World for the last decade, yet few powerful trials have been used to test its value, while those trials which have been done are often ignored. In consequence this commonly used investigation is so often misinterpreted; over-reaction leads to over-action and over-treatment. It is all very well saying that the principles underlying cardiotocography and the abnormalities should be fully taught and discussed clinically at the bedside. Some are not fortunate in having teachers who can understand and explain the physiopathological changes clearly. For these doctors, Messrs Wood and Dobbie do very well and the authors have produced a neat book with a message.

After introductory chapters on the rationale of testing, the equipment to be used and the vocabulary, the book is divided into two long sections of antenatal and intrapartum cardiotocography. At the end is a short section on diagnostic pitfalls which sums up problems that may lead to the misinterpretation of traces. The examples are clearly printed with clinical data alongside. Excellent summary boxes pepper the pages at correct intervals like the newspaper placards used to chronicle the drama of a five day test match.

This book is well produced and should be read by all obstetric senior house officers at the beginning and again at the end of their stay, thus teaching them and then reinforcing their learning. All postgraduate libraries and labour ward bookshelves should have a copy of this volume.

Professor Geoffrey Chamberlain
*St George's Hospital Medical School,
London SW17, UK.*

High Altitude Medicine and Physiology, Michael P. Ward, James S. Milledge and John B. West. Pp. xii + 515. Chapman and Hall Medical, London, 1989. £50.00

It is a remarkable fact that the highest point on earth can just be reached by acclimatized man (Messner, 1978) without supplementary oxygen. The climatic and physiological changes that permit this feat are clearly explained in this equally unique and masterful reference book. The three authors have taken part in numerous scientific and mountaineering expeditions over the last 30 years and this collaborative work will be welcomed by a worldwide audience of doctors and scientists interested in high altitude medicine and hypoxia.

The first chapter describes man's fascination for this subject and includes many of the 'giants' of respiratory physiology. After chapters on climate and geography, the response of each system to high altitude exposure is detailed with about fifty references to each of these sixteen chapters. The respiratory system I found particularly clear.

Writing this review in the Margherita Hut (4560 m), the first high altitude laboratory in the Alps, gave me a

compelling interest in the chapters on acute mountain sickness.

Considerable progress has been made in the prophylaxis and treatment in recent years, although fatalities from high altitude pulmonary and cerebral oedema continue to strike trekkers and climbers. The final chapters cover hypothermia and other hazards, clinical lessons and fitness for high altitudes.

This is an excellent book. The text is very readable and divided into manageable sections. References are extensive and right up to date. For those involved in this fascinating field it is a must at any price.

J.J. Milles
*Department of Medicine,
Good Hope District General Hospital,
Sutton Coldfield,
West Midlands B75 7RR.*

Key Anatomy for Radiology, Simon Westacott and John R.W. Hall. Pp. 227, illustrated. Heinemann Medical Books, London, 1988. £17.50.

Human anatomy has not changed since Gray's First Edition of 1858, but every year new books on the subject appear. Clearly there is no new anatomy; what we have are new ways of looking at the same old structure. In compiling atlases of anatomy for use with computed tomography scanners, with magnetic resonance imaging, with ultrasound scanning or with angiography, the choice of material is straightforward – it is those anatomic features which are shown by the particular method of imaging. However, in attempting to abstract the most relevant aspects of anatomy to cover the whole range of radiological investigation, the authors faced the much more difficult problem of choosing not what to include, but what to leave out.

This book is primarily aimed at trainees in radiology who are preparing for the part 1 examination of the FRCR. In general the selection of material is entirely suitable for the purpose, though the level of detail provided is necessarily limited. The layout of the book is fairly consistent in that each chapter or section begins with a brief descriptive account of a structure or area followed by a list of its anatomic relations, and a list of methods of imaging which may be used to demonstrate the structure clinically. The text comprises about half of the book, the rest is made up of line diagrams, which have in general been derived by the authors from radiographs and scans produced in patients. In the drawings anatomic detail has been sacrificed for increased clarity, an approach which is entirely acceptable in this context.

The text is unavoidably concise and selective. The narrative style is mostly didactic ('the transverse colon is 50 cm long'), but there are one or two rather dubious statements ('the brain is normally demonstrated by plain films and tomography . . .') and a few lapses into banality ('The lower limb supports the body in an upright position and is used for locomotion').

Creating a concise summary of a most detailed subject is always a difficult task and in this attempt these authors have done well. This book will be a very useful starting point not