

Book Reviews

Tuberculosis and Leprosy, British Medical Bulletin Vol 44 no 3 July 1988 – Scientific Editor R.J.W. Rees. Pp. 297, illustrated. Churchill-Livingstone, Edinburgh, London, 1988. £22.50.

This number of the 44th volume of the British Medical Bulletin continues the high reputation of these books. It traces the recent advances in clinical knowledge and scientific understanding of mycobacterial diseases but why the title refers only to tuberculosis and leprosy is not clear. These advances have been helped by the development of DNA libraries and, in the case of *M. leprae* of the DNA bank which was made possible by the successful cloning of the entire *M. leprae* genome and its expression in *E. coli*.

Progress in the production of monoclonal antibodies against *M. tuberculosis* and the characterization of antigens at the T-cell level are described well in the first chapter. This, together with subsequent contributions on the metabolism of pathogenic mycobacteria, the structure of mycobacterial antigens, and the antigen specificity of human T-lymphocyte clones reactive with mycobacteria gives a fine picture of advances at molecular and cellular level. The role of activated macrophages is discussed in an interesting chapter on the immunopathology of tuberculosis including the interaction of gamma-interferon and its effects, which include the release of tumour necrosis factor (TNF).

For the clinician not only is this easy-to-read background to the advances critical to the understanding and the planning of the future clinical management and treatment strategies but the more clinically orientated problems are also dealt with very well. The contribution on extra-pulmonary tuberculosis where short term chemotherapy is the treatment of choice is a partnership from the MRC Cardiothoracic Epidemiology group at the Brompton Hospital and from Ruttonjee Sanatorium Hong Kong. The use of newer antibacterial drugs for the treatment of mycobacterial disease in man deals not only with tuberculosis but also with the effective treatment of *Mycobacteria avium* – *intracellulare* – *scrofulaceum* (MAIS) complex infections. It describes the fluorinated quinolones as amongst the most promising drugs at least for treating leprosy. This subject, the chemotherapy of leprosy, is dealt with separately and looks at the super-vised use of rifampicin with dapsone and clofazimine all of which are recommended for multibacillary patients. Finally in an easily read contribution the agents which may be used for the treatment of opportunist mycobacteria infections in acquired immuno-deficiency syndromes are well described.

Overall this is an excellent book, well up to the usual and expected standard of the British Medical Bulletin with good editorial style, a wide range of discussion on various mycobacterial diseases in general and it can be recommended for all those involved in the treatment of patients with opportunist infections due to mycobacteria and for those working or in the immunological and molecular fields. The title does not, alas, reflect the breadth of the contents.

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MCQs . . . Brainscan, Peter Elliott. Pp. 190. Springer-Verlag, London, Berlin, Heidelberg, New York, etc., 1989. Softcover DM 30.00.

This book contains 300 multiple choice questions suitable for candidates about to sit the examination for Membership of the Royal College of General Practitioners. The questions are grouped into the 15 subjects which have been chosen as relevant to general practice by the Royal College of General Practitioners examiners and the number of questions in each group is proportional to the number of questions the candidate would find in that group in the examination itself. The questions are printed on the right hand page and the answers conveniently overleaf. A major problem with MCQs is often ambiguity in the question itself and in his preface the author carefully defines the most common terms which he has used. This definition of terms is useful and since an effort has been made to avoid absolute figures, although the wording of the questions is sometimes a little contrived, very few ambiguous questions exist. It also gives the book a reasonable shelf life but unfortunately with the beginning of the new contract in April this year, a few of the questions on practice management are now out of date. This book will certainly help revision for the Membership of the Royal College of General Practitioners examination and some Trainers may wish to use it early in the training year as a means of assessing their new Trainees factual knowledge as long as it is appreciated that MCQs often fail to identify large deficiencies in the candidate's ability. The book is not expensive but it must have a limited shelf life and perhaps the MCQs which regularly and frequently appear in the medical tabloids will be of more use to Trainers who with a regular turnover of Trainees need up to date factual knowledge with which to work.

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Human Growth After Birth. 5th Edition, David Sinclair. Pp. ix + 259, illustrated. Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, Tokyo, 1990. Paperback £12.50.

Why is the second permanent molar called the factory tooth? What was the result of David Livingstone's encounter with a Lion? Why should you choose your parents carefully? These, and other interesting snippets of information are to be found in the latest edition of this book. Its intended audience is pre-clinical medical students, nurses, science students being introduced to human biology, and paramedical workers. In the rewritten first chapter there is an excellent gentle and widely based introduction to cell biology looking from mitosis and meiosis through cellular, organ, and whole body function in the guise of an overview of growth.

In the following chapters the reader is led in more detail through many aspects of the growth of organs, tissues, and systems, and their relationships. During this journey

there is a clear and largely painless introduction to the way growth charts are produced as well as used, with a good explanation of their limitations.

To do full justice to this book perhaps requires a deeper knowledge of human structure and function than would be expected from this audience, but they will already be meeting so many of the subjects raised that this should encourage them to seek out the answers.

The use of animal comparisons encourages lateral thinking, and the section on old age warns that most longevity is prolonged disability.

I thoroughly recommend this readable paperback to the suggested audience, and suggest some clinicians might find it of interest.

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How To Do It: 3. Pp. x + 203, illustrated. British Medical Journal, London, 1990. £6.95, abroad £9 incl. airmail p. & p.

The high and consistent reputation of the *BMJ* is testimony to the excellence of the editorial team and the incredible contacts they seem to have. Most of the medical profession feel the need for a journal which fills so many roles, catering for those who need their next job, those who seek to keep up generally in the scientific sense, and those who like to know what is going on in the profession. In addition, week after week, there are series of enjoyable and well written commissioned articles, of which this is the latest anthology.

Whilst the title is a little uninformative and might mislead somewhat, the nature of this book is evident from the contents page. It is, quite simply, what doctors need to know once they have passed the stage of sitting exams. It continues the wisdom of the first and second volumes in this series and is full of what I have learned the hard way, and what young consultants and GP principals should now be encouraged to learn the easy way.

The articles on management, personnel matters, fund-raising, publicity, lecturing and care of lecturers are the most useful ones. Arguably the clinical contributions, such as the setting up of coronary rehabilitation, DNA diagnostics, and diabetic care in general practice, should have been included in another collection. Even so, despite the slight incongruity of some subjects, the enjoyment and standard is consistent.

The *BMJ* is run by literate, educated people. This series is written by various friends and contacts who are of the same genre. It therefore provides enjoyment to those who enjoy good writing. It would be a lie to say that one could not be without this volume; but it's nice to have a copy, and in its own modest way it will continue to be a useful reference book in Postgraduate Centres.

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Ear, Nose and Throat Disease, Kevin P. Gibbin and Patrick Bradley. Pp. 156. Springer-Verlag, London, Berlin, Heidelberg, New York, etc., 1989. DM 35.00 softback.

This paperback book of multiple choice questions in otolaryngology succeeds well, although 156 pages of MCQ sounds indigestible. However, the authors have produced a modestly priced work, which provides education, self assessment and indeed, entertainment. The format is clear with ready reference to the answers, which appear overleaf on every page. Points of detail are provided with the answers, which reinforce the educational value and largely overcome the boredom factor, which so easily sets in with such works. The subject matter is pragmatic, clinically orientated, and generally non-controversial. Postgraduate nursing students and junior ENT medical staff will find it invaluable, although most medical students, with the inadequate time devoted to study for specialty, will find it heavy going.

Your (Consultant) reviewer undertook the self assessment exercise scoring some 85% over all, and enjoying the occasionally contentious statement.

At least one copy should be in every ENT Department library.

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On Stress Disease and Evolution, Graham W. Boyd. Pp. iv + 246. University of Tasmania, Hobart, Tasmania, 1989. A\$29.95 paperback.

Some approach cardiology as if the heart was autonomous and prone to accidents related to diet, smoking and other factors nominated by epidemiologists. Others see it as the innocent and subordinate member of a brain-heart couplet whose functions are both sensitive to interactions with the external environment, and vulnerable to catastrophic disruption when the products of arousal outstrip homeostatic control and physiological tolerance. Professor Boyd belongs to this school and puts his case clearly. He presents the evidence for the view that focal vasoconstriction can generate both patchy atheroma and the dynamic causes of angina pectoris and myocardial infarction. He describes the real or hypothetical role of focal vasoconstriction in a number of other conditions that include hypertension, Raynaud's disease, migraine and epilepsy, asthma and Crohn's disease. These conditions can be regarded as disorders where the quantity rather than the quality of responses leads to pathological changes. I am sympathetic to his case because hyperventilation, which can heighten arousal and trigger vasoconstriction in some circumstances, appears to me to be important in these conditions.

I am not well enough steeped in cancer and evolutionary theory to appraise Professor Boyd's observations on those fields, but he sounds honest and plausible. His book is a useful guide to the history and philosophy of science.

Its chief gift is a better hypothesis than we have had, i.e., a better framework for comprehending cardiology's explosion of fact-finding; a better model for accommo-