Book Reviews

Annual Review of Immunology, Vol. 8, edited by W.E. Paul, C. Garrison Fathman and Henry Metzger. Pp. 819. Annual Reviews Inc, Palo Alto, California, 1990. \$38.00 (USA & Canada) \$42 elsewhere.

Review volumes on immunology can be compared with other newspapers and periodicals; they cater for readers with different tastes ranging from serious scholars of current events to those who prefer a more simplistic presentation. By this analogy, the series of *Annual Reviews of Immunology* is perfect for readers of 'up-market' newspapers or even Times supplements. This is not a conclusion based on a uncritical preference for prolixity. The editors of this volume, like its predecessors, have commissioned chapters by scientists who favour reasoned arguments, unvarnished data regardless of their complexity, dispassionate synthesis and a honed, elegant economy of style. They eschew facile theories and shortcuts through the available data yet the enthusiasm is evident and infectious.

This volume therefore is designed for readers who prefer solid sustenance to pap. For example it can perfectly well be tackled by doctors unversed in immunology, and not just by mature immunologists. A willingness to engage in disciplined mental concentration is a prerequisite whereas prior knowledge of the subject is not. It is not recommended to those who struggle into wakefulness only when a lecturer announces that he is just about to deliver their 'take home message'. The book is not encyclopaedic so that readers may or may not find the dish of their choice on this year's menu. There are safe offerings, such as chapters on the T cell receptor complex and immunity to HIV. But there are also unfamiliar morsels, such as contributions on the function of bone marrow stromal cells and catalytic antibodies.

Nevertheless, it is still possible to browse enjoyably and profitably through this book. Brigitte Askonas' miniature autobiography makes delightful reading, with a highly salutary message for aspiring immunologists that the road to fortune starts with a grounding in biochemistry. Her piece also demonstrates that immunologists can write as clearly and lyrically as anyone. Acolytes will even find sympathy in this volume; '... currently accumulation of data is proceeding more rapidly than integration of data' declare Ullman *et al.* (page 441). They should also draw courage from Peter Medawar's dictum, implicit in many of this book's chapters, that the accumulation of knowledge eventually leads to simplification. Furthermore, while there are publishers still prepared to offer feasts like this at soup kitchen prices, medical and scientific readers can rejoice that philanthropy in the cause of learning is alive and flourishing.

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Cancer of the Colon and Rectum, The Seventh King's Fund Forum Consensus Statement, King's Fund Centre, 126 Albert Street, London NW1, 1990.

This small volume encompasses many questions associated with the treatment of colo-rectal polyps and preventative measures to reduce the incidence and mortality of colo-rectal cancer. The efficacy of modern treatments and suggestions for the direction of future research are also covered. Where there are clear answers to problems of screening and patient review, these are clearly stated, as are the quandaries that still exist and the areas which are inappropriate for investigation and treatment.

The clear summary of these important areas of concern, together with practical guidelines for the management of patients, are comprehensively treated.

This is a very useful little volume, which should be mandatory reading for all medical students and doctors whose practice involves patients with colo-rectal problems. It could also prove of great help to patients enquiring about the risks of malignant disease, especially if they belong to a high risk group.

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Current Surgical Practice, Vol. 5, edited by John Hadfield, Michael Hobsley and Tom Treasure. Pp. 300, illustrated. Hodder and Stoughton, London, Auckland, Melbourne, 1990. Paperback £24.50.

This 5th volume in the series continues to record lectures given at the Royal College of Surgeons of England. The authors are asked to express their opinion rather than to present standard review articles.

The book contains a fascinating selection of topics and includes in its second half a symposium on iatrogenic surgical disease. Before turning to this section, my eye was caught by the first chapter on specialism and generalism in surgery, written by one of the editors. This certainly presents the author's personal views; I found several points of difference of opinion. That does not necessarily detract from the value of the chapter!

The section on iatrogenic disease opens with a consideration of the philosophy of medical defence which is a salutary reminder of the standards required of all medical practitioners and of the appropriate response if injury should occur. Each chapter in this section contains an analysis of the causes of the particular complication under discussion, followed by a description of the means of prevention and finally details of treatment. They are almost all of high quality, with only the chapter on anorectal stenosis being disappointing in its brevity. There are excellent contributions on facial palsy, the laryngeal nerves, bile duct injuries, and the ureter, to mention only some, although I believe that on page 271 the surgeon should be advised to divide the attachments

of the splenic or hepatic flexure of the colon, rather than the flexure itself to visualize the ureter!

The remaining chapters provide a varied selection of points of interest from current surgical practice. There is an excellent review of endoscopic therapy for bleeding peptic ulcers which points the way forward in this field. The surgeon who wishes to understand the principles of laser therapy and their practical applications would be well advised to consult the chapter on that subject. One of the editors has contributed a chapter on thromboembolic disease from the perspective of a cardiac surgeon which gives a different emphasis than the usual view of the general surgeon. Other chapters which deserve mention are the extensive review of the management of thyroid cancer and the chapter on carcinoma of the oral cavity which contains numerous excellent illustrations. It is not possible to list all the chapters, but each makes enjoyable and interesting reading. There are three chapters on colorectal subjects, which interlock neatly, although I cannot understand why the word 'ostomy' is used in place of the more usual 'stoma'.

This book is based on lectures given to candidates for the College Fellowship examination. It is clearly aimed at this audience although many more experienced trainees and established consultants will find much of interest and value in its pages. If only for the section on iatrogenic surgical disease, this book should be available in the postgraduate library of every hospital.

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Diagnosing and Treating Mental Illness, Allan Lundy. Pp. 133, illustrated. Chelsea House Publishers, New York, Philadelphia, 1990. Hardback £14.95.

The foreword to the book states that 'It explains to all readers how professionals sift through various signs and symptoms to define the exact nature of the various mental disorders and fully describes the most effective means of alleviating them'. I wonder who the readers would be. The book is brief, comprehensible, easily readable, perhaps for the non-psychiatrist and for those in the early years of psychiatric training. Illustrations keep the reader interested and certainly there are good chapters explaining various forms of psychotherapy, but the book is rather short on biological treatments and there is no mention of ECT (electrical convulsive therapy) which is of tremendous value to the seriously depressed patient. Evaluation and diagnosis of mental illness are more DSM-III-R based and there is no mention of ICD-9 or 10 (Internal Classifications). The index gives only American addresses as expected and the reading list is rather short. The glossary part of the book is a good inclusion for the reader to refer to. Overall at £14.95 for 136 pages it is rather expensive for the British public.

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Emergency Psychiatry, Tom M. Brown, Allan I.F. Scott with Ian M. Pullen. Pp. xii + 208, illustrated. Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh, London, Melbourne, New York, 1990. Paperback £5.95.

Psychiatric emergencies are usually assessed by duty SHO's and registrars, many of whom have to deal with difficult problems by themselves with often only limited access to advice from their seniors. It is to these trainees that this book is addressed. It gives detailed practical help and instruction on a wide range of commonly encountered problems arising in patients sent for admission or seen in casualty departments, such as deliberate self-harm, alcohol and drug-related conditions, depression, acute psychosis, acute confusion, dementia and severe stress. This advice is presented mainly in the form of check lists, but also as 'practice points' which warn the readers of common pitfalls. The sections on difficult patients, such as those who make the hospital staff feel angry or helpless or who have a potential for violence, are particularly good and helpful. Emergencies in other settings, such as the general medical, surgical and obstetric wards and the patient's home are dealt with very adequately and there is a brief section on the use of mental health legislation (in England and Wales, in Scotland and in Northern Ireland) in emergencies.

Trainees who refer to this book when they are on duty will find their task of assessing and managing psychiatric emergencies much eased. It is highly recommended.

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Essentials of Respiratory Disease, 3rd edition, R.B. Cole and A.D. Mackay. Pp. 250, illustrated. Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh, London, Melbourne, New York, 1990. Paperback £14.95.

'Clear and readable' it sets out to be, clear and readable it is. Its 250 pages cover concisely all important aspects of respiratory assessment, physiology and disease. The balance of material is good and the authors wisely resist the temptation to place undue emphasis on fashionable problems such as sleep apnoea and AIDs. This is not a robust library reference book, but is an ideal volume for medical students and doctors in training to borrow from the library for a succinct and factual account of respiratory diseases.

There are errors, such as the limit of resolution of CT scanning, and one can discuss whether mesothelioma causes clubbing and whether the patient on treatment for pulmonary thromboembolism with anti-coagulants should be kept in bed for a week, but overall this is a book to be recommended. It deserves a wide audience and, if its entry into the Library of Congress Catalogue is corrected, I hope it will get one.

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