Book Reviews

A Handbook of Essential Drugs and Regimens in Hematological Oncology, edited by Aaron Polliack. Pp. xii + 165, not illustrated. Harwood Academic Publishers, Char, Reading, Paris, Philadelphia, Tokyo, Melbourne, 1991. £14.00, paperback.

This book is designed to slip neatly into a white coat pocket and is well put together. The book is divided into two: the first half summarizes the cytotoxic agents which are in common use and includes a description of the side effects of these drugs. This section is well laid out and more detailed than the BNF (British National Formulary) but the clarity of the text should not lull a generalist into the belief that chemotherapy is easy to administer. There is no substitute for adequate training and 'hands on experience', indeed there are areas in the book where more cautions could have been given. For example the hazards of Busulphan therapy in the hands of an amateur and the risk of a cerebellar syndrome when using high dose Cytosine Arabinoside are higher than this monograph implies.

The second half of the book sets down many of the current chemotherapy regimens which are used in the treatment of haematological neoplasms. Although my practice is to keep typed drug protocols in 'see-through plastic envelopes' within a loose leaf binder, I am sure that his handbook will be welcomed by many haematologists as it is clear and well referenced (this latter point is a particularly good feature). My major criticism is the omission of favoured protocols, yet I am sure any group of haemato-oncologists would disagree on which regimens merited inclusion. Therefore, I would advise the author to add two blank pages to each disease section in the next edition: so that these can be appended. Another potential difficulty with such a book is that it rapidly goes out of date; for example, the section on multi-emetics and the inclusion of the IMVP-16 regimen for relapsed high-grade lymphomas (which is now considered worthless). The only solution to this latter problem is to publish an updated edition every two years. In summary this is a useful, inexpensive aide-memoire for practising haematologists.

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Introduction to Dialysis, 2nd Edition, edited by M.C. Cogan & P. Schoenfield. Pp. xiv + 384, 52 illustrations. Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh, London, New York, Tokyo, Melbourne, 1991. £37.50, hardback.

This text from respected US authors, appears in a second edition just before a rival volume *Handbook of Dialysis* (edited by Daugirdas and Ing), emerges in its own second edition. Is this *Introduction to Dialysis* what it claims to be, a useful introduction to sound dialytic therapy, and can it be recommended to the junior doctor new to the dialysis unit? Chapter 1 is a detailed description of dialysers and delivery systems: whilst vital reading for technicians, senior nurses and senior doctors involved with dialysis, it is not appropriate reading for clinically

orientated junior doctors. Chapter 2 'Access for dialysis', devotes ten pages to the almost obsolete Scriben shunt, whilst giving much less information on the subclavian catheter. The details about the artero-venous fistula are inadequate for a vascular surgeon but excessive for an introduction to dialysis. The three chapters which constitute the core of the book, devoted to the care of the patient on haemodialysis, on peritoneal dialysis and between dialysis, are a gold mine of information, although it must be said that an initial 60 pages of kinetic modelling theory reveal the editorial bias of the book. Finally, there is an exhaustive compendium of pharmacologic considerations in dialysis patients, which summarizes much data only found in original articles.

In summary, the book is unbalanced and poorly focused. It is neither a convenient pocket guide for a junior doctor, nor is it sufficiently comprehensive book to replace the standard text *Replacement of Renal Function by Dialysis*. It will prove a handy inexpensive addition to the library of a kidney unit but will probably not be used as a day to day working reference for front line treatment.

Acute Renal Failure 1990, edited by D. Rainford & P. Sweny. Pp. vii + 336, not illustrated. Ferrand Press, London, 1990. £34.50, hardback.

Acute renal failure is a problem still facing clinicians in medicine, surgery, nephrology and intensive care. With increasingly complex surgical procedures and an increasingly elderly population, the need for an understanding of the causes and prevention of renal failure and the range of techniques and treatments available is more important than ever.

The recent series of meetings between intensivists and nephrologists has proved invaluable in forging a common path through the minefield of multiple organ failure and the thorny problem of outcome measures.

This slim volume is the distillation of a meeting on Acute Renal Failure, held at the Royal Free Hospital in 1989. It sets out to summarize the recent advances in the clinical aspects of diagnosis and management of patients with acute renal failure. It covers the pathophysiology of renal failure, its complications, management and outcome measures, with separate chapters on topics such as ARDS, the hepatorenal and haemolytic-uraemic syndromes, and multiple organ failure.

Sensibly, there is no attempt to cover the whole field, but reference is made to recent review articles which the reader can consult. The book highlights recent advances, current controversies and some of the practical problems of management. It includes an excellent discussion of dialysis membranes and their characteristics, the use of CAVH and CAVHD, a masterly brief review of the haemolytic-uraemic syndrome by Martin Barratt and a thought-provoking overview by Stewart Cameron.

The problems of infection are well covered but more discussion on the use of drugs in renal failure would have been welcome.

Inevitably some progress has been made since the book was written. We now know more about the potential