Book Reviews

Colitis, Michael P. Kelly. Tavistock Routledge, London, 1992. Paperback £10.99.

It is difficult to categorize this book. It belongs to a series entitled 'The Experience of Illness' and is written by an academic from a personal viewpoint. The contents of the work are based on interviews with 50 patients who have had severe ulcerative colitis and in some cases had already had an ileostomy. The work does not claim to be objective and that perhaps is where its strength lies. Although there are now a number of programmes which are investigating strategies for coping and the effects of chronic illness on work and personal relationships, clinicians have in the past frequently claimed that people with ulcerative colitis suffered few disabilities and at times implied that if they did it was the consequence of their personality rather than the disease.

Michael Kelly attempts to redeem the imbalance by a detailed exposition of the problems described by these patients and how they coped or failed to cope with the consequences of their disease. For those with an active interest in the topic the message is not new; for those whose interest is more than passing the book is perhaps too long and unlikely to reach its target audience. One feels that this is a missionary work and as such it needs to be more directed and more challenging.

Is this a book one can recommend? For the fit young doctor or nurse ulcerative colitis can be an annoying condition or, more correctly, patients who have the disease can be annoying. For those who have never experienced illness the complaints of people who are not about to die carry little weight. For them this book should open their eyes. A life limited by the need for toilet facilities, relationships broken by embarrassment or faecal incontinence are reasons for concern by the 'caring professions'. My only concern is whether those who need to read this book will get the chance to do so.

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Elements of Medical Genetics, eighth edition, A.E.H. Emery and R.F. Muller. Pp. ix + 348. Churchill Livingstone, London, Edinburgh, New York, Tokyo, 1992. Paperback £14.95.

Emery and Muller succeed in providing a further excellent edition of their well-established detailed introduction to medical genetics.

Earlier editions have always been dense with information and the latest edition is no exception. Particularly welcome are a number of clear line drawing diagrams and highlight summary blocks at the end of each chapter. Bibliography is extensive and divided into classic publications, textbook and review articles. The book advertises itself as a core text for medical students. Few undergraduates would have the time to read it in detail.

That said, any undergraduate or postgraduate prepared to devote the time to detailed study of this book would know a great deal of applied medical genetics by the end of the exercise.

Most of the modern, soft-cover medical genetics introductions are good value and this edition of 'Elements' is no exception. Those in the field will find it a useful and up-to-date summary as will those who feel that they need to refresh and update their knowledge.

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Guidelines on Patient Care in Radiography, C. Gunn and C.S. Jackson. Pp. viii + 223, illustrated. Churchill Livingstone, London, New York, Melbourne, Tokyo, Edinburgh, 1992. Paperback £8.95.

This is the second edition of a book which first appeared ten years ago, and which has proved of value to many radiography students. It brings together in one small volume many of the facts that a caring radiographer needs to know.

The opening chapter discusses departmental organization and includes a new paragraph on computerization. Health and Safety and professional attitudes are briefly discussed. Next is a short chapter on hygiene, mainly of the radiographer (but is it really necessary to state that 'regular bowel habits are to be encouraged' – of the radiographer, not the patient?).

Two chapters cover general management of a patient, with stress on the ill and unconscious and with good emphasis on the correct and safe ways of lifting patients. This is followed by an updated chapter on infection, now including a lengthy section on AIDS; there is also revision of the chapters on drugs and contrast media.

The care of the patient in the radiotherapy department is comprehensively covered, with discussion of the complications and side effects of radiotherapy, as well as some of the surgical and therapeutic procedures undertaken in the department, especially chemotherapy regimes. In the diagnostic department most of the common procedures are mentioned, although some of the listed examinations are now almost obsolete; it is a pity that there is no mention of mammography, a technique that requires special skills to obtain perfect films in the often very worried and anxious patient. Also useful would have been mention of the requirements when inserting barium enema catheters (often performed by radiographers) and the radiographer's role in laying up trolleys and assisting in the insertion of nephrostomy and other drains. The sections of computer tomography and magnetic resonance imaging (the word 'nuclear' was abandoned many years ago) could be considerably expanded.

The chapter on resuscitation has been completely revised, but the chapters dealing with various common conditions such as fractures, diabetes and haemorrhage