Book reviews

Hypertension

Manual of hypertension, JD Swales, ed. pp xvi+182, illustrated. Blackwell Science, Oxford, 1995. £22.50, paperback

I very much enjoyed reviewing this book. The lay-out is user-friendly with excellent illustrations. I was pleased to see that the spread of authors was world-wide with a good representation from continental Europe, where much excellent work in this field is carried out.

It should be stated that this *Manual of hypertension* is based on the weightier tome by the same editor, viz, *Textbook of hypertension*. This manual is best aimed at undergraduate/postgraduate students and general physicians who wish to hone up on hypertension. The chapters on Consequences of hypertension, Clinical history and examination, and Non-pharmacological treatment were particularly good. The importance of treating hypertension in the elderly is correctly stressed throughout various chapters. Indeed, I believe that this issue is sufficiently important to warrant a chapter on its own. For the more esoteric-minded among us, there are interesting chapters on hypertension and thyroid disease and acromegaly, and hypertension and central nervous system disease.

Overall, I think that this manual is an excellent introduction to hypertension and I have no hesitation in recommending it.

TONY O'BRIEN
Southend Hospital, Westcliff-on-Sea,
Essex, S50 0RY, UK

Hypertension. Assorted topics, BM Hegde, MA Shetty, MR Shetty. pp xv + 108. Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan Bombay, India, 1995. Hardback

A short textbook of hypertension written by Indian doctors for Indian doctors in India is greatly to be welcomed. With increasing urbanisation, hypertension and its complications are becoming progressively more common throughout the developing world and there is much to be done. The Indian community in Britain probably has the highest coronary heart disease rates of any group anywhere in the world and there is every reason to believe that this epidemic will also devastate the economically active population in India.

As a practical guide, this is a clearly written volume but is a pity that there is practically no mention of the role of plasma lipid levels as powerful co-factors in cardiovascular morbidity and mortality. Also the authors do not discuss in detail the major mortality and morbidity clinical trials published since 1990 (SHEP, MRC-II, STOP), with their improved results in terms of coronary prevention.

Indeed there is a generally venerable rather than state-of-the-art feel about the whole book, not helped by the use of yellowing paper and a galaxy of typographical and spelling errors. The contents section reveals that these authors have opted to be eclectic rather than comprehensive. There is a chapter

devoted to the beta-blockers but none to any other class of drugs. The chapter devoted to recent advances could have been written 10 years ago, although there are many useful comments.

Despite these eccentricities, the authors reveal an eminently sane and sensible attitude towards the topic with occasional personal views which cannot be faulted. What India is to do about the millions of undiagnosed hypertensives in the population at large is not discussed, as this volume does not cover the epidemiological or public health aspects of the commonest preventable non-infective medical condition in the world.

DG BEEVERS
City Hospital NHS Trust,
Birmingham, B18 7QH, UK

Molecular genetics

Human molecular genetics, T Strachan, AP Read. pp xiv+597+index. Bios Scientific Publishers, Oxford, 1996 £29.95, paperback, ISBN 1 872748 69 4

Personally, as a clinical geneticist, I find this book quite useful and up to date. Even at its modest price, however, it will be more useful for most medical practitioners or specialists to have a copy in the main library, rather than a departmental or personal copy. Research workers trying to get into the subject in some detail could find it useful. It deals with more than purely molecular genetics and is in fact a general genetics textbook, discussing risk assessment, Bayesian and other mathematical models, theories of heterozygote advantage and some of the ethical issues surrounding medical genetics. It is very much a dry textbook and contains a good deal of laboratory-based theory. Thus it is not an easy book to read or even browse through. However, when I tested it by looking up a few topics, I found them adequately dealt with. It is modern in including details of some useful electronic database addresses. The quality of the many diagrams and figures is generally excellent, though I did detect an omission. In the diagram of gene expression in the animal cell, there is no mention of membrane proteins, simply intracellular and excreted. There is a useful abbreviation page and glossary although, in their definition of positional cloning of a gene, the authors have forgotten that the first successful uses did not depend on the subchromosomal localisation being known. It would have been more useful to define it as position in relation to other genes where the gene product is unknown. The index is comprehensive. There are a number of note-boxes and 20 numbered boxes with pink backgrounds where the authors wish to highlight a particular aspect. The book has an enormous amount of fine, detailed, factual knowledge. While I pity any student who would be required to be examined on its contents, it is convenient to have all this information in one place.

MAURICE SUPER
Royal Manchester Children's Hospital,
Manchester M27 1HA, UK

Rheumatology

ABC of rheumatology, Michael L Snaith, ed. pp vii+90, illustrated. BMJ, London, 1996. £14.95, paperback. ISBN 0 7279 0997 5

It is often difficult to find a first point of reference in a given specialty. So often, one has to wade through a voluminous textbook containing intricate detail concerning a specific clinical problem. *The ABC of rheumatology* provides an ideal introduction to this complex area of medicine.

It is a glossy slim volume, easily readable, with at least three or four excellent photographs on every page. The text contains excellent tables which can be used to prepare slides for teaching or as bullet-points. Some chapters are centred around practical aspects of musculoskeletal conditions, for example, pain in the wrist and hand, with short paragraphs on specific diagnoses.

Other chapters, written by recognised UK experts in each field, address common rheumatological diseases. The author's approach is practical as well as simple and provides outline knowledge with sufficient detail to keep the reader interested. It would have been helpful, however, if further reading could have been suggested for those wishing to explore topics in greater depth.

For those involved in the multidisciplinary team approach, working with patients with chronic rheumatic disease, the book includes a special chapter. Whilst rather imprecise, this section is a useful introduction for those wishing to launch a service of this type. *The ABC of rheumatology* is written for the family doctor and those embarking on MRCP (Part I). Its succinct style will no doubt please learners and teachers alike.

CS HIGGINS
Queen Mary's University Hospital,
London SW15 5PN, UK