BOOK REVIEWS


This book is made up of several individual BMJ articles. The articles discuss initially the history of antenatal care. This is followed by the story of pregnancy from diagnosis to conclusion by birth going through physiology, pathology, investigations and management of normal as well as the commonest of pregnancy abnormalities.

The clear uncomplicated language helped by appropriate illustrations make this book a joy to read. The book is mostly factual and the author tries to steer away from controversial issues. Therefore it is ideal for medical students, midwives and general practice trainees as well as junior SHO’s in Obstetrics and Gynaecology.

The material is quite up to date with references to the triple biochemical screening test to estimate the risk of Trisomy 21 as well as uterine and umbilical artery blood flow doppler studies.

The section on work in pregnancy is most interesting as very few books discuss scientifically both specific and non-specific health hazards of different work practices on an expectant mother as this book does. Medical problems in pregnancy are discussed in a brief but clear way.

I would strongly recommend a copy of this book in every antenatal ward and clinic.

O K Morris


This book is an invaluable resource for those interested in or called upon to talk on the subject, and covers all clinical applications of lasers from brain (p51) to bunions (p63).

The first quality of this book that strikes the reader, is how well it is planned and laid out. The authors have a thorough and well-structured approach to their subject, transmitted through chapter headings which are well chosen and in a logical order; physics, tissue effects, types of laser, delivery systems, applications and safety.

The Contents list gives a full outline of the book's headings and the Glossary of terminology is at the front rather than the end of the book. All these make it quick and simple to retrieve and understand information on a specific topic.

Lasers can be used without any in-depth understanding, as just another clinical tool. This may be especially true in the case of younger colleagues to whom lasers have been accepted technology throughout their training, and who were not practising at the time when a particular laser application was passing through the experimental/clinical trial stage of development and all journal articles carried details of the mechanics and physics. Lasers in Medicine and Surgery concisely fills this potential knowledge vacuum.

One section of the book I found inadequate however was that on Diode lasers. These are increasingly finding applications in my field (ophthalmology), but are given less than a page. In a book such as this, dealing in some detail with the physics of all other medical lasers, I would have expected to see Diode lasers being covered in similar detail.

I feel secure having added this book to my departmental library, and shall certainly be dipping into it again, before the next time I have to face questions on the subject of lasers from an inquisitive junior or demanding audience.

M F P Griffiths


As one would expect from a colour atlas this book is packed with high quality colour images. Chapters are arranged in sections covering coronary artery disease, non-ischaemic cardiomyopathies, vascular pathology, shunting and valvular disease. The chapters conclude with excellent case histories to illustrate the value of nuclear scanning in cardiology. A list of useful references completes the book.

The overall value of the book could be improved by a few more comments on technique and basic line diagrams. Although the scan images are of excellent quality the sheer number of presented images and their commentary often confuses rather than clarifies some areas. A few diagrams would certainly improve this aspect.

In its present form the atlas is a book for the expert (who probably doesn’t need it). It is too complex to be a useful handbook for the person who is merely interested in adding to their knowledge on this subject and at a price of £79.50 is more likely to find its place in libraries and departments rather than in the hands of an individual.

N Ineson


This short text-book is aimed at “medical students and junior hospital doctors at the level of their first appointment.” It accomplishes this in just under 200 pages of text covering most important topics in cardiology. The diagrams deserve particular mention in terms of their excellent quality and quantity.

In such a short text-book it is inevitable that some areas receive less attention than they deserve but two
paragraphs on such an important topic as hyperlipidaemia seems a little brief.

The chapter on practical and therapeutic procedures deals with the very important issue of cardiac resuscitation. This particular chapter contains some excellent practical advice but does not follow the standard UK Resuscitation guidelines and gives no guidance to the levels of shock to be delivered in defibrillation.

Notwithstanding these comments this book does accomplish its aim in a very readable well illustrated form and is of particular value to the medical student.

N Ineson


Research into the origins of adult disease is obviously of crucial importance, and if it were at all possible to identify causes which start to exert their effects in infancy and childhood, and take appropriate corrective action, what enormous benefits could be achieved. Thus the rationale motivating such research, but the benefit of collecting a limited series of papers into one volume is more obscure. This book, of 343 pages, is a selective anthology of 31 "seminal" papers, of which 30 were written or co-written by the editor, with a descriptive introduction summarising the various studies. Whereas there is no dispute about the importance of the papers presented, it is difficult to believe that their presentation in this form represents a significant contribution to the advancement of knowledge in this field. It is disappointing that the papers have merely been presented as published, and that no more serious attempt has been made to review or analyse critically the subjects covered other than that presented in the introduction. The interested reader would probably do better to redirect his budgetary resources and turn his attention towards Silver Platter, which would give him a greater selection of papers from the much wider international field.

I D Evans


This paperback book comprises articles published in the British Medical Journal in 1992. It presents a concise, readable, and very straightforward series of accounts of the more important recent findings on the effects of environmental pollution on health. As such it is unlikely to provide any very significant new information to a specialist in the field of public health medicine, but is an invaluable summary of the present state of the game. It will be of considerable interest to any medical officer, environmental health officer, or indeed, any layman, with an inquiring mind who wishes to update himself on these issues of considerable public concern.

In the introduction Sir Donald Acheson points out that Britain was the first country to industrialise, and also one of the first to recognise the baleful influence of this process on the health of the people. He also points out that the effects of the world wide extension of this process are now likely to be felt by the tenfold increase in global population since 1850, who themselves increase the burden of waste which the earth has to absorb. His main theme is that there is an unstable relationship between population, health, and a sustainable environment. The problems posed are so intractable, and have such potentially serious effects, that their solution must be at governmental or supra governmental level. However, he is not noticeably optimistic about the chances of the application of effective political action.

The citation of the WHO Health for All by the Year 2000s third global objective of "making all organisations and individuals aware of their responsibilities for health and for its environmental basis" has clear implications to the military and in its widest sense forms the basis for the raison d'etre for the speciality of Army Public Health and Occupational Medicine (latterly, and more succinctly, known as Army Health).

The following series of chapters present the main facts and discuss the health implications of over-population, global warming, ozone depletion, air and noise pollution and these also encompass waste disposal, radiation and the safety of drinking water. However, the latter chapter does perpetuate the idea that John Snow "elegantly" showed the waterborne cause of the 1854 London cholera epidemic by the removal of the handle of the Broadstreet pump. He in fact made a painstaking statistical and topographical analysis which linked polluted water supplies to mortality from the disease and it is uncertain whether he in fact interfered with the pump.

In summary this thinnish book can be firmly recommended to a wide readership as a valuable overview of these important topics, and also as preliminary reading for any medical officer contemplating a career in Army Public Health Medicine.

P J Blackburn


This slim volume consists of a collection of articles originally published in the BMJ. It is very wide-ranging in the topics covered. However, the premise that the social, political and economic union of Europe will occur seems to be accepted throughout. Recent events have put the ratification of the Maastricht treaty in considerable doubt.

The article entitled "1992 and all that" provides an overview of existing and proposed EC legislation on matters concerning health. It then goes on to outline the complex institutional maze that a proposal from the European Commission must negotiate to become either a Regulation (European Law) or a Directive (compul-
sory objective to be translated into National Law by individual member states).

The following articles consider such diverse topics as European health challenges, European health care systems, medical education, medical manpower, nursing, prescribing, medical research, ethical matters, medicolegal matters and equal opportunities. In most cases of these areas there are huge differences in organisation, funding and philosophy and it is difficult to see how there can be a unification of health care. This is frequently rationalised by setting broad health care objectives and suggesting that it will be up to individual states how they achieve them. As a confirmed Euro-sceptic, I find it difficult to believe that this will work. In addition, the article entitled “Who speaks for whom?” points out that there are a large number of medical committees representing the views of the profession in Europe. Many of these groups have limited interests and internal problems and do not communicate well with other groups. This has led to both duplicated effort and conflicting views being represented to the decision makers with a consequent loss of credibility.

There are also articles on nutrition, tobacco, and drugs and alcohol which point out differences between health and trade objectives and social attitudes across Europe. These will add further difficulties to achieving integrated health care.

The concluding article entitled “The Way Ahead” emphasises that now is the time for interested parties to mobilise themselves if they wish to influence future health policy in Europe. This book provides an excellent introduction to the problems and I recommend it to anyone with an interest in the future of medicine in this country and the European community, whether or not they are pro-European.

R Whiteoak


This is one of the better volumes in the Colour Atlas series, with a particularly high standard of photographic illustrations, though of course the vulva, lying on the external surface of the body, can be photographed with greater facility than regions that are more occult.

The lay-out is done in a logical manner that successfully caters for the needs of both the experienced clinician seeking confirmation of the diagnosis of an unusual condition and the tiro with little knowledge of the subject.

As acknowledged in the Preface, a book of this nature cannot cover all aspects of the subject, and would need to be used in conjunction with other reference books. However, it provides a most useful adjunct to more lofty tomes on a subject about which many practitioners have only a limited knowledge, and it is to be recommended for use by a broad spectrum of clinicians from medical students to hospital specialists.

I A Lees


This book is on the whole interesting, and the format and presentation render it readable.

The author has associated the book with the need of the General Practitioner to fill the void created through lack of education relating to matters associated with nutrition, at medical school. It is difficult to perceive that this book will fill this inadequacy.

The average GP is unlikely to encounter the problems associated with the Third World, thereby rendering this section geographically inappropriate.

However, Chapter 9 — “Other Nutritional Deficiencies in the Affluent Community,” is both interesting and relevant in the present climate, the section on nutritional states affected by drugs being most worthy of inclusion.

Certain criteria are well addressed eg. the relationship of LDL/HDL in association with Coronary Heart Disease; principles and management of obesity; the association between Sodium and Hypertension; feeding of children and adolescents.

The sections relating to Diabetes, a condition which GP’s are being encouraged to manage in their own surgery deserves a much higher profile, the scanty reference to diet being nebulous, with no suggestion of recommended Blood Glucose level to indicate control.

An update of information relating to certain criteria is required, some examples being:—

a) Pregnant mothers are not encouraged to consume liver due to high Vitamin A content.

b) It is generally not necessary to reduce fat intake through consumption of low fat products in the elderly (NAGE — National Advisory Group for the Elderly 1991 — Specialist Group of the British Dietetic Association.)

c) Phenylketonuria — breast feeding is often encouraged; 10-12 years is a more realistic age at which diet may be relaxed rather than 8 years.

d) Coeliac Disease — the address of the Coeliac Society is Dept. 1, PO Box 220, High Wycombe, Bucks HP11 2HY.

e) Foods to be avoided when taking Monamine Oxidase Inhibitors — Banana — skins only, Broad Beans — Pods only.

Chapter 14 relating to Enteral and Parenteral Nutrition is most appropriate with increasing numbers of patients fed by these routes in the community being encountered. However, the protocols formulated by some establishments would not endorse the view of the author on self intubation.

Throughout the book, a reduction in SUGAR intake is given little priority eg. P23 — the giving of sweetened fruit juice to an infant, by any method should be discouraged. Four years ago, on a visit to Western Australia, No Added Sugar products were almost impossible to obtain, — perhaps the Australians do not
give the same emphasis in general to reducing sugar in the diet as we British — see COMA and NACNE recommendations (COMA: Committee on Medical Aspects of Foods 1984, NACNE: National Advisory Committee on Nutrition Education 1983).

If the UK GP is to use this book it would be advisable for UK relevant reference only to be used to consolidate reading and comprehension.

An interesting book, but would be of limited value to a GP attempting a crash course in Nutrition.

With acknowledgement to Mrs A E Cleary SRD


This short book describes the development of some important cardiovascular drugs from plants. It is magnificently illustrated by full page illustrations of each species of plant described, often using antique prints.

I found it a fascinating book with interesting facts about the development of each drug — who knew that "though dicoumarol was enthusiastically used by clinicians, warfarin (a rat poison) was ignored — until an Army recruit failed to commit suicide by taking a huge dose — warfarin was shown to be better and safer than Dicoumaral." Not a particularly auspicious role for the Army in the development of this drug!

This short book could not be regarded as an undergraduate or even postgraduate essential text book but it can be recommended to any doctor or health care worker who wishes to know a little more on the origins of today’s drugs. Cardiologists and botanists in particular will pass a pleasant evening reading this short text.

N INESON


This handbook sets out to be a pocket size reference for the busy clinician. In 804 pages (33 chapters) it covers the assessment of the medical patient, the evaluation of clinical and laboratory data, information on common medical problems and therapeutics. This synoptic approach concentrates on practical clinical information and excludes pathophysiological and epidemiological data.

An attractive feature is the appropriate use of tables, algorithms and figures either to summarise information or to clarify difficult concepts. The best written chapters are those on differential diagnosis, general management of poisoning, disorders of thermoregulation and endocrinology. Laboratory tests and therapeutics are usefully summarised in two other chapters.

The book caters for a North American audience, but would widen its appeal if it were to include SI units. It would also benefit from including a systematic approach to interpreting electrocardiograms and common x-rays. The four colour plates in the chapter on dermatology serve little purpose and these could be omitted. Details of various tests should be included in the relevant chapters. Fluid and electrolyte disturbances and acid-base balance should be placed in one chapter for convenience. Finally, although references are up-to-date, the book would benefit from cross references to a standard medical text.

Despite these minor criticisms it is a useful ward manual for the junior physician, anaesthetists on their preoperative visit, medical students and nurses. Its small size, spiral binding and low cost makes it an ideal white coat companion!

W F De MELLO

OBITUARIES

Regimental Headquarters would welcome self written obituaries and when completed they should be forwarded to Regimental Secretary RHQ, RAMC, Keogh Barracks, Ash Vale, Aldershot, Hants GU12 5RQ.