Annual Review of Clinical Biochemistry. Vol 1. Ed DM Goldberg. (Pp xix + 379; illustrated; £12.) John Wiley & Sons. 1980.

This series sets out to summarise in a critical fashion the important developments in the field of clinical biochemistry and metabolic medicine on a yearly basis. While the aim that the reader should 'have no further need to read any other periodical in the subject' is a very laudable one, Vol 1 of the series published in 1980 reviews the literature of 1978. Clearly, however, it would be difficult to publish any faster than this.

Despite this limitation and the fact that all the contributors have had to be extremely selective, to some extent at the expense of comprehensiveness, this book goes a long way in fulfilling its aims. It is not a book for the specialist but provides a useful entrée into the literature in a wide range of different fields of clinical biochemistry. Some chapters, such as those on quality control, laboratory management, and instrumentation and computers, will probably have little appeal outside the field of clinical biochemistry. Many of the chapters, however, such as those on renal disease, biliary disease, gastrointestinal system, diabetes, cancer, and clinical enzymology, will have a wide appeal to both pathologists and physicians. Chapters such as those on hormones, biochemical aspects of genetic disease, and plasma proteins will also be of considerable interest to biochemists working in fields other than clinical chemistry.

If the series continues to maintain this standard it will provide a useful contribution to the literature available to clinical pathologists.

JT WHICHER

Bone Tumors. Diagnosis and Treatment. Joseph M Mirra. (Pp 629; illustrated; £45·25.) Harper & Row Ltd. 1980.

This is a substantial book, not only in size, but also in its objectives. The aim is a comprehensive coverage of the subject as an aid to the practitioner in reaching a correct diagnosis through consideration of all the pertinent possibilities. The method turns on the use of questionnaires (diagnostic tables) and careful assembly of all the relevant information—clinical, radiological, anatomical, and pathological. Allowance is made for the possibility that the diagnosis will remain tentative and that there must be appeal to more experienced authority. The questionnaires indicate the appropriate didactic sections, nine in all. The tumour classification is conventional, but the entities are described with others showing the same principal histological feature, the identification of which is the point of departure for the questionnaires. Confusing for the tyro, perhaps, it is refreshing for the pathologist to be taken boldly across so many frontiers.

There are also sections on histopathological techniques, interpretation of x-rays, terminology, and treatment. The paper is heavy and glossy, the illustrations mostly good, the index serviceable, and the references sufficient (reaching 1977/8).

This is an American production, solid in its groundwork, sometimes overdecorated, but always serviceable. Certainly, it is a reminder of the flexibility of the American language, which is here nearly always understandable. The author has drawn on a large experience and has put a great deal of thought and effort into this book. Those who use it will be well served. One can fairly say that the author has realised his objectives.

PD BYERS

Inborn Errors of Metabolism. Ed Roland Ellis. (Pp 105; illustrated; £8·95 hardback, £3·50 paperback.) Croom Helm Ltd. 1980.

The editor and his colleagues have succeeded in presenting in a clear, well-written style, accompanied by good illustrations, a little book on inherited metabolic disease, which can be read comfortably in one or two evenings. Chapters have been allocated to most of the major metabolic systems, including lipids, mucopolysaccharides, carbohydrates, amino acids, purine, and pyramidine metabolism, with an additional chapter on trace metal metabolism. There is an introductory but very brief chapter on the genetics of these disorders and a final chapter outlining possible future developments in the management of these fortunately uncommon but distressing diseases. The topics chosen for discussion are by and large the better known diseases, and there is a nice balance between the classical work and the more recent contributions to our knowledge. Inevitably, one is conscious of the omissions in such a small book. For instance, although thalassaemia is mentioned in passing in two places, it would have been more appropriate to have allocated a chapter to the discussion of disturbances of haemoglobin synthesis and porphyrin metabolism. Urea cycle defects could also have received more attention. The discussion of disorders of lipid metabolism is confined to storage diseases of complex lipids, and the more common hyperlipidaemias are ignored. In a book which is notable for its good explanatory text there are occasional obscurities such as reference to eponymous diseases, for example Batten disease, without enlightening the reader further. An undergraduate student should not have to look this up even though his elders may feel compelled to. There are numerous tempting references mentioned in the text. It is a pity that the bibliographical details are not given at the end of each chapter. As it happens this would not have added to the number of printed pages.

The editor has adapted the convention of writing, for example, 'Hurler disease' rather than 'Hurler's disease.' 'Wilsons disease' and 'Descemets membrane,' however, look very odd without apostrophes. I will never get used to Addison disease.

There is no doubt that this book makes a useful introduction to the subject but would benefit from some enlargement in a future edition.

MG RINSLER

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Inborn Errors of Metabolism

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Notes