

Other correspondence

Fate of gross specimens in pathology

We read with interest the letter by KW Chan concerning the use of a photocopier to record details of certain specimens, and applaud the simplicity, inexpensiveness and usefulness of this technique.¹ In a similar vein we state our experience in disseminating information among members of staff and thus inexpensively raising the level of our "group consciousness".

In most departments of histopathology it is customary to dispose of gross surgical specimens after reporting within a variable period of time, which may be anything from a few weeks to several months. This period depends on the flow rate of specimens and the storage area available. This procedure denies pathologists, other than the one doing the cut-up, the experience of inspecting the macroscopic appearances.

In our laboratory we designate a "hot-seat" registrar, who in one of his roles, inspects on a weekly basis all specimens which have been present in the laboratory for one month or more. He selects those of general interest and sends them to the mortuary, where all junior and senior colleagues meet once a week. The "hot-seat" registrar, who has a copy of the written histology report, coordinates the meeting by asking for opinions on the macroscopic specimens. After opinions have been proffered, including those from the consultant staff, the registrar reveals the "true" answers.

This exercise is useful for the following reasons:

- 1 The exposure of all pathologists in the department to gross appearance is widened;
- 2 The histology is correlated with macroscopic appearances;
- 3 Materials which are suitable for current teaching and museum preparation are identified;
- 4 An audit is kept on unreported specimens;
- 5 The verbal intercourse which ensues sharpens wits, stimulates interest, and helps maintain diagnostic standards.

Most specimens, although distorted by surgical cut-up, can be reconstructed to a satisfactory degree. Those which are likely to be totally destroyed can now be photocopied as suggested by Dr Chan.

We acknowledge the value of careful inspection of gross pathology and believe that the common intradepartmental experience

of such yields many subtle dividends. It is also cheap.

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Reference

- 1 Chan KW. Use of photocopier for recording pathological specimens. *J Clin Pathol* 1988; 41:478.

Book reviews

Virulence Mechanisms of Bacterial Pathogens. Ed L James, A Rothy. (Pp 390; member \$55; non-member \$75.) American Society for Microbiology. 1988. ISBN 0-914826-99-9.

This well produced volume is derived from the International Symposium on Virulence Mechanisms of Veterinary Bacterial Pathogens held in Iowa in 1987. The omission of the word "veterinary" from the title of the publication is justified, since many of the pathogens discussed cause infection in man, and a comparative approach is employed that is often illuminating. Five of the book's six sections discuss different aspects of host pathogen interaction, while the sixth is a review of current knowledge and possibilities for future research. The format leads to some repetition in places, but this does not detract from the value of the book which, as a whole, provides a stimulating review of a complex subject. The writing is consistently lucid and there are numerous references, many of them very recent. The book should be read by anyone interested in the ways in which bacteria produce disease.

DM HARRIS

Candida and Candidosis. A Review and Bibliography. 2nd ed. FC Odds. (Pp 468; £35.) Bailliere Tindall. 1988. ISBN 0-7020-1265-3.

Dr Odds' monograph has attracted much critical praise since it first appeared 11 years ago. The wealth of information which has been published since then has required the text to be expanded and largely rewritten. New chapters have been added on Candida

genetics and allergy, but the other titles and layout remain essentially unchanged. The 27 chapters deal comprehensively with biology of the organism, and with candidosis of different sites and organ systems. Other chapters deal with serodiagnosis, pathogenesis, and antifungal agents.

This is a remarkable book containing a wealth of information on Candida and its associated diseases. The text is liberally supplied with tables which represent a masterly assemblage and analysis of data from a wide range of sources. The reader can thus examine the basis for the critical commentary made in the text itself. The style is clear, concise, direct, and informative. It is also easily read. The author has not been afraid to express opinions, which are argued convincingly, and at times pungently. As a source of information (almost 5800 references are cited) this book is in a class of its own. No clinic or laboratory with an interest in Candida or candidosis can be complete without a copy on its bookshelves.

DWR MACKENZIE

General Pathology. 6th ed. JB Walter, MS Israel. (Pp 739; £49.50.) Churchill Livingstone. 1987. ISBN 0-443-03089-8.

Walter & Israel's *General Pathology* is a classic—the first edition came out a quarter of a century ago, the 6th is just published with 55 chapters filling over 700 large pages at a very reasonable price of less than £50. Even classics must adapt, however, and at a time of great change in a subject they may need a fresh start. The new edition is informative, well illustrated, well referenced, but fails to carry the excitement that molecular and cell biology has brought to pathology. Its age shows in a number of ways—the retention of old attitudes such as the grudging acceptance of mesothelioma as an entity, or the suggestion that thyroglobulin is a sequestered antigen. The lack of acceptance of the new pathology shows in inadequate discussion of point mutations and disease, inadequate discussion of inherited tumours—the description of the inheritance of retinoblastoma lacks the key explanation of inherited heterozygosity but acquired homozygosity in the cells giving rise to the tumour. Many small points of criticism could be made, but the book remains remarkable for the breadth of coverage by two authors, even though they now have specialist assistance from two more. It remains a classic, but a worthy classic rather than an inspiring one.

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