Book reviews

Histology of the Fetus and Newborn. MA Valdés-Dapena. (Pp x + 654; illustrated; £25.75.) WB Saunders. 1979.

This is essentially an atlas of histology supplemented by a brief text, half of which is devoted to embryology and anatomy. The aim of the book is to provide a reference for the pathologist unfamiliar with the normal appearance of tissues at different stages of gestation, and this is achieved best in the sections where a sequence of microphotographs is presented at the same magnification. Ultimately, an atlas of histology must be judged by the quality of its photomicrographs, and this is very variable; too many, particularly at low magnification, in this volume are poor by normal publishing standards. This is a disappointing book, since, as the author rightly claims in her preface, such a volume is needed.

AAM GIBSON

The Vibrios. AL Furniss, JV Lee, and TJ Donovan. (Pp viii + 58; illustrated; £2.00.) HMSO. 1979.

This short review in the PHLS Monograph Series first surveys the clinical infections in man caused by vibrios. Next, methods for their isolation and identification in routine clinical laboratories are described fully. The current concept of classification into halophilic and non-halophilic species is discussed, together with their nomenclature and relationship to similar organisms of potential clinical significance such as aeromonas and plesimonas. This booklet is a practical and well-presented guide to a somewhat poorly understood group of organisms. It is strongly commended as a good buy.

GI BARROW

Immunology at a Glance. JHL Playfair. (Pp 74; illustrated; £2.25.) Blackwell Scientific Publications. 1979.

This book embodies 35 schematic diagrams and a short text with a glossary of the objects or terms used in the diagram. Each diagram summarises what might be the content of a 45-minute lecture, and is intended not to instruct immunologists but to help those upon whose work immunology is liable to impinge. The

outcome is immunology in visual presentation which, if studied carefully, provides a large amount of potted information. The subjects covered range from evolution through natural immunity to adaptive immunity, which is re-examined in terms of potentially useful and undesirable effects and means of altering these. The idea behind the book is novel. All the diagrams succeed in summarising much of the up-to-date information on each subject, and if an examination candidate had grasped it sufficiently to put it into perspective he would pass with flying colours. The question is whether the book will achieve its object if the reader starts with no knowledge of the subject. I suspect that a minimum is needed—but perhaps today's clinicians and paraclinicians have this, in which case let them buy the book, which represents good value, and try.

JH HUMPHREY

Liver and Biliary Disease. Ed R Wright, KGM Alberti, S Karran, and GH Millward-Sadler. (Pp xxiv + 1345; illustrated; £38.50.) WB Saunders. 1979.

This new comprehensive text on liver disease is coedited by a physician, a biochemist, a surgeon, and a histopathologist. All aspects of hepatic pathophysiology, disease, and medical and surgical management are dealt with. The book is admirably produced and clearly, on the basis of many up-to-date references, there has been excellent co-operation between contributors, editors, and publishers.

Inevitably, there are some imbalances and some evidence that cross-editing was perhaps not as thorough as it might have been. There is only a short 15-page chapter on immunological aspects of liver disease and this does not really do full justice to the subject. An excellent chapter of the same length deals with hepatic involvement by lymphoreticular disease; but has this really become such an important topic? Some 100 pages are given to more recent investigative techniques, whereas medical aspects of paediatric liver disease are summarised in a brief 15 pages. The chapters on portal systemic encephalopathy and on ascites, electrolyte disorders, and renal failure

might with advantage have been included in the section devoted to pathophysiology. The division of the book into a section on pathophysiology and one on diagnosis and management has produced somewhat artificial separations (eg, the chapters on cholestatic syndromes) and unnecessary repetition (eg, the portal circulation is described three times). These, however, are constructive criticisms which the editors might consider with regard to the inevitable subsequent editions that will be required of them as a reward for their present splendid achievement.

The success of this book seems assured. It will serve as an excellent reference book on liver disease and it is highly commended to physician, surgeon, biochemist, and histopathologist. Your reviewer derived particular pleasure from the excellent histopathological accounts and from the high quality photomicrography.

RNM MACSWEEN

Alkaline Phosphatase. RB McComb, G Bowers Jr, and S Posen. (Pp xvi + 986; illustrated; \$75.) Plenum Press. 1979.

The enormous and steadily growing volume of literature concerning alkaline phosphatase testifies to the great clinical importance attached to measurements of this enzyme activity. However, the sheer quantity of data is a deterrent to the most efficient performance and interpretation of alkaline phosphatase measurements. The appearance of this comprehensive review of the current status of knowledge with regard to alkaline phosphatase will, therefore, be particularly welcomed.

The book includes chapters on the comparative distribution of the enzyme throughout the plant and animal kingdoms, its purification, structure, and mechanism of action, and industrial and veterinary applications of its measurement. However, the chapters relating to the measurement of alkaline phosphatase activity, the multiple forms of the enzyme, and the clinical utilisation of alkaline phosphatase determinations are those that will particularly interest the clinically orientated reader.

It is unlikely that the literature on alkaline phosphatase, particularly that describing earlier studies, will again be