in hoping that it ‘may also help more senior pathologists’. The classification adopted is simple and practical. The chapters on ‘reactive’ lesions and the fibromatoses are invaluable. The book deals at some length with conditions like fasciitis which ‘the British medical literature has virtually ignored’. The author draws extensively on the American literature to which so great a debt is owed in this field.

There are few misprints, though ‘pruritis’ in Table 4.1 is unfortunate. The Table distinguishing non-osteogenic fibroma from the giant-cell tumour of bone is marred only by the statement that the latter is ‘surrounded by sclerotic bone’ in the gross. The final chapter could with benefit be transferred to the beginning of the book. A detailed clinical history, proper macroscopic examination, adequate tissue sampling, examination of unirradiated material, etc., are points that are too important to be left to the end. But these debatable points in no way detract from the general excellence of this work.

J. G. AZZOPARDI


Most malignant tumours in man show some chromosomal abnormality—childhood tumours and acute leukaemia are partial exceptions—yet it remains impossible to state whether chromosomal change is either an essential cause or a consequence of the formation of a tumour. This ignorance might imply that genetic studies have failed to elucidate the fundamental nature of cancer and its causes. But such an assumption would be wrong as this symposium, held in Houston in 1969, makes clear.

Six hundred pages of detailed reviews and subsequent discussions cover a wide field equally divided between clinical and experimental research. For man, several papers deal with the topics of genetic predisposition and of clonal evolution. Advances have stemmed largely from the use of genetic markers, both enzymic and chromosomal, but the search for specific abnormalities analogous to the Φ chromosome has been disappointing. One promising new approach explores the relationship between the susceptibility of an individual’s cells to transformation by SV40 virus and his probability of developing a neoplastic disease. This leads to a consideration of the mode of action of viruses and other oncogenic agents upon DNA, and the subject of DNA repair is reviewed.

Two experimental techniques deserve particular mention. One is cell hybridization, the fusion of two cells of dissimilar kinds, which is a valuable means of exploring somatic genetics and of distinguishing the role of nucleus and cytoplasm. The other is the creation of allophenic animals through the mixture of fetal cells from two sources at the earliest stages of embryogenesis. The result is a mosaic individual with cells of both types evenly distributed in all tissues. If one cell type is from a strain of high cancer incidence and the other from a low cancer strain the question can then be asked: Does hyperplasia or neoplasia stem from the high cancer strain cells or from both? The answer can be found in this symposium.

H. E. M. KAY


This is not a book for easy reading by the general reader. It is, however, a volume of the greatest importance to specialists and to endocrinologists. It surveys knowledge in the recently developed and vitally important field concerning the hormones secreted in the hypothalamic area of the brain, which control the function of the anterior pituitary gland. It reports, at length, the proceedings of a meeting held in the USA in January 1969, which was attended by a large number of experts in this field. The interpretations of the findings reported are examined extremely critically, both in the papers, and in the excellent discussion. The field is broadly covered by dealing not only with problems of assay of the hormones and current knowledge of their chemistry but also with the mechanisms of their secretion and its control. It might be especially noted that since the conference took place the thyrotrophic releasing factor is the first of these hormones to be characterized and finally synthesized.

F. T. G. PRUNTY

Fatal Civil Aircraft Accidents By P. J. Stevens. (Pp. xii + 206; 102 figures. £5.50.) Bristol: John Wright and Sons Ltd. 1970.

In the field of aircraft accident investigation, now well established, the small Halton RAF team has consistently demanded—and has itself shown—high standards of professional skill both at the scene and in the laboratories. We have so far had official reports, scattered papers, and Mason’s very fine book on ‘Aviation Accident Pathology’ published in 1968, and now Stevens adds his experience in the investigation of civil accidents. He is a world authority, like Mason, and it was important that he also should sum up his views on translation from the RAF to the civil consultant pathology.

This is a splendid book. It is remarkably comprehensive, yet so well written that it is orderly, reads succinctly, and with clarity. It is not over cluttered with statistics, yet the important data are there, and it is well illustrated. Stevens’s great concern over the proper analysis and correct interpretation of natural diseases, alcohol or drug and CO intoxication emerges in what is in fact the longest single section on the analysis of public transport accidents. The same pattern of analysis is followed in the shorter sections on light aircraft and glider fatalities. Much of this may now be new for those who have read the professional journals or heard Mason or Stevens at conferences, but the practical survey of a planned investigation of a major airliner disaster is most valuable. This is where experience counts, and this too, is where (as Stevens points out) even an enthusiastic amateur is better than an disinterested professional. Sims may well wish to withdraw this stand in odontology when his experiences of this field of study approaches that of Stevens.

What emerges clearly is the need for attention to detail and absolute accuracy rather than professionalism. This book must have the attentions of all pathologists who accept medico-legal responsibilities.

KEITH SIMPSON