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Book reviews

£2.60.) London: William Heinemann Medical Books. 1971.

This is an account of a workshop meeting organized by the Marie Curie Memorial Foundation in May 1970 at the University of Surrey.

Four papers are concerned with steroids and human breast cancer. They include a clinical appraisal of empirical steroid therapy, studies of *in vivo* and *in vitro* uptake of oestrogens by tumours, and steroid metabolism in breast cancer patients.

Are oestrogens carcinogenic? A useful review of this controversial field concludes that in man the evidence is still inconclusive. The role of steroids in cancers other than breast also gets a welcome airing, and, all in all, this well produced volume succeeds in its stated aim of spanning the boundary between clinical and scientific disciplines.

C. B. CAMERON

Renal Infection and Renal Scarring Proceedings of an International Symposium on Pylonephritis, Vesico-Ureteric Reflux and Renal Papillary Necrosis held at Royal Melbourne Hospital, March 1970. Edited by P. Kincaid-Smith and K. F. Fairley. (Pp. 439; illustrated. \$A24.74.) Melbourne, Australia: Mercedes Publishing Services; edition sponsored by Beecham Research Laboratories. 1971.

This is an account of a good meeting attended by many people of merit in the field. The topics included bacteriuria and pyuria, the site of infection, treatment, chronic pyelonephritis, vesico-ureteric reflux, and renal papillary necrosis. One of the biggest single advances in this subject has been the simple method described by Fairley to identify the site of the infection. It is therefore a pleasure to read about his use of his technique. Fairley and his group also point out a very interesting anomaly in that they find in common with most workers that intermittent bacteriuria with or without clinical evidence of infection is almost never associated with deterioration of renal function but that sterile pyuria associated with continuing evidence of renal infection is associated with a relatively rapid onset of renal failure. Gower describes some interesting observations on plasma antibactericidal activity in patients with upper urinary infection. And Asscher develops his fascinating observation that the mechanism for im-

paired growth and renal scarring in pyelonephritis of the growing rat are not the same. The section on treatment is not so interesting, except that once more it emerges that follow up of patients with urinary infections is far more important than the particular antibiotic that is used. The high rate of side effects with ampicillin is again mentioned. And Kunin gives a masterly summary of his work on the urinary recovery of nitrofurantoin in relation to glomerular filtration rate. The section on vesico-ureteric reflux is particularly interesting because of the presence of Shannon, Rolleston, and Utley from New Zealand. Their demonstration that severe reflux can cause destruction of the renal parenchyma in the absence of infection is a very nice piece of work.

The final section on papillary necrosis is particularly relevant to a meeting in Australia where the widespread compulsive consumption of analgesic tablets results in 8% of all necropsies showing evidence of papillary necrosis. There are some very interesting papers about the pathology, clinical, and radiological aspects of the disease. Unfortunately the idiosyncratic views of Kincaid-Smith and Prescott that the necrosis is due to the ingestion of aspirin is once again given an airing, despite the fact that in man the evidence is all to the contrary. Kincaid-Smith's faith in aspirin derives from experiments in rats which demonstrate that their renal papilla, unlike man's, appear to be very sensitive to aspirin ingestion, whereas Prescott's belief has been sustained by his original finding that aspirin ingestion in women increases the urinary excretion of renal tubule cells. In this symposium, however, he also gives an interesting account of the metabolism and central nervous system effects of phenacetin.

This is a book which anyone interested in the kidney should have available.

H. E. DE WARDENER

Muir's Textbook of Pathology, Ninth Edition Revised by D. F. Cappell and J. R. Anderson. (Pp. xiii + 976; illustrated. £10.00.) London: Edward Arnold. 1971.

What a task it is to write a modern 'text-book'—or to revise an obsolescent one! If the book is intended primarily for undergraduates—as this one is—it must be kept to 'reasonable' size and cost. But if it is to include a proper consideration of recent advances, something must be abbreviated or discarded to make way for

them. One can imagine spirited discussions between those responsible for the revision. Surely we can cut down on syphilis? But can we, for is not the intrepid treponeme asserting itself anew and would it not be terrible to allow a generation of doctors to arise who knew nothing of its ravages? These and similar conundrums must have been posed repeatedly over such matters as rheumatism, bacterial diseases, and rickets. Conditions such as these, which were common in the days of earlier editions of Muir, must have been considered candidates for abbreviation to make space for 'fashionable' fields like immunology and revised classification of such things as bone tumours and lymphomas, and for clinico-pathological correlations.

D. F. Cappell and J. R. Anderson, who have successively followed Sir Robert Muir in the Chair of Pathology at the Western Infirmary in Glasgow, deserve our warmest congratulations in having negotiated these difficult decisions so successfully. The new volume is a mere 16% heavier than its predecessor—but alas the price is doubled.

The first quarter of the book, dealing with general pathology, has been extensively re-written and now includes a 44-page section on immunity and immunopathology that is a masterpiece of compression. There is also an excellent new chapter on healing and repair.

The sections which follow, on special or systemic pathology, adhere, for the most part, to traditional lines. Bone pathology and skin pathology may perhaps be picked out as beautifully presented and succinct accounts of these special fields, but, while acknowledging this, one wonders if the undergraduate needs such detailed information. In other chapters, particularly perhaps in dealing with the heart, a rather more functional approach and more attention to clinico-pathological correlations would have been welcome. It may be that the minimal emphasis on these aspects reflects the fact that Scottish universities examine in pathology at an earlier stage of training than some others.

In the preface Professor Cappell and Professor Anderson list a considerable number of their Glasgow colleagues who have been responsible for the revision of individual chapters and one wonders if the future will see Muir transformed, as so many other textbooks have been, into a multiple-author production.

The publishers have done an excellent job in producing a well laid out volume with innumerable clearly reproduced first-