Book reviews

Tropical Sprue and Megaloblastic Anaemia Wellcome Trust Collaborative Study (Pp. xxii + 318; illustrated. £47.5.) Edinburgh and London: Churchill Livingstone. 1971.

This book records the experiences of a number of groups studying tropical sprue. These workers are Drs S. J. Baker and V. I. Mathan in Vellore, India, Dr F. Klipstein in Haiti and New York, Colonels W. O'Brien and N. W. J. England in Singapore, and Drs C. C. Booth and D. L. Mollin in London. In addition East Africa is represented by Drs H. Foy and A. Kondi. There is a full account of both the endemic and epidemic forms of the disease in South India with a wealth of biochemical and haematological detail in individual patients and a further account of the disease among the native population in Haiti. The manifestations of sprue in immigrants to an endemic area are described in relation to British servicemen in Singapore, and finally the manifestations in patients who have once lived in an endemic area and returned to temperate zones.

This full account of an important and puzzling disease should be on the bookshelf of everyone in the field of gastroenterology and will also be of absorbing interest to all pathologists.

I. CHANARIN

Recent Advances in Cancer and Radiotherapeutics: Clinical Oncology Edited by Keith E. Halnan. (Pp. xi + 412; illustrated. £6.00.) Edinburgh and London: Churchill Livingstone. 1972. Longman Group Ltd.

The 13 chapters are divided about equally between radiotherapy and other aspects of clinical oncology, ranging from practical down-to-earth things such as 'After-loading methods in radiotherapy' to interesting speculations on 'Transplantation and cancer'. The book brings the reader up to date with the main lines of progress in radiotherapy—neutrons, hyperbaric oxygen, the use of computers, and the applications of radiobiological theory. It also contains excellent authoritative chapters on chorioncarcinoma, childhood leukaemia, and Burkitt's lymphoma, and there is a critical look at the recent history of the treatment of breast cancer by McWhirter.

The chapter on chemotherapy, however, is somewhat unbalanced considering the vast amount of work to be surveyed and, conversely, it may be doubted whether immunotherapy, which does not yet exist as a clinical operation, deserves a chapter to itself.

This attempt to present a current growing point in medicine—clinical oncology—is to be welcomed. It is a subject in which radiotherapists will inevitably have much to say but which has a much broader scope; and the future will demand more physicians and pharmacologists in particular to be included in its multidisciplinary structure. Future editors, please note.

H. E. M. KAY

Pregnancy Nephropathy 2 Vols. By John Sophian. (Pp. xv + 531 and xi + 585; illustrated. £20.00 cased.) London: The Butterworth Group. 1972.

This book represents the author's experience over a period of approximately 50 years. It is a massive work in two volumes and quoting about 3000 references.

The main subject of the book is pregnancy from the point of view of its renal complications: it emphasizes toxæmia, eclampsia and hypertension, but there are long sections on the physiology of the kidney in health and under stress, on the circulation with special emphasis on renal aspects, and on hormones affecting renal function. The topics are discussed largely on the basis of the numerous references quoted by the author. It is not always easy to follow the analysis of these references. This is partly because of difficulties of style. One also has the impression that ideas which may have been very clear to the author are not put across with the same clarity to the reader. It is doubtful whether such a fundamental discussion of topics not immediately related to the subject of the book needed to be discussed in such detail. Not that the main subject is thereby forgotten—far from it. The sections on toxæmia and eclampsia are an apologia for the theory that these diseases are caused by the uterorenal reflex. The evidence is convincingly presented and with great enthusiasm. At times the enthusiasm seems to have anticipated the evidence. A number of experiments performed by the author amongst others are described which seem to corroborate the theory

and there is an interesting section on the haemolytic uraemic syndrome. The facts as presented certainly give cause for thought. The world at large does not seem to accept this theory with the same single mindedness as Mr Sophian which does not mean that he is wrong.

The book's price at £20 is high and will probably severely limit its readership. It will probably be of greatest use as a reference book.

ANTHONY EISINGER

Clinical Hypersensitivity Disorders By Gunnar Bendixen. (Pp. ix + 163; 4 figures. \$13.25.) Springfield Illinois: Charles C. Thomas. 1971.

This book is one of a series whose laudable object, when disentangled from the metaphorical superlatives of the editorial preface, is to present the chemical basis of clinical practice. 'Chemical' is clearly used in a catholic sense and in this volume means the pathogenesis of disorders due to hypersensitivity. The reader is taken to be an interested clinician and the approach is general rather than detailed. While this leads to errors of oversimplification these are compensated for by the readability.

The basic mechanisms are each described in turn and their role in clinical conditions indicated. The three types of hypersensitivity mediated by antibodies are given names which, though slightly strange, convey the principles involved better than the numbers sometimes used. Cellular hypersensitivity is divided into categories according to the sort of antigen involved, eg, microbial, transplant, etc. Though this destroys the unity of the concept of the cell-mediated response it can be justified pragmatically. In view of recent advances in the field the limitation of the chapter on microbial antigens to tuberculosis and epidemic parotitis is deplorable.

Because of its brevity, though not its price, the book could be useful to someone wishing to get a quick outline of the subject but a serious study would need something more rigorous. The English translation is good though idiosyncratic in places.

A. A. GLYNN

Progress in Allergy Vol. 15. Edited by P. Kallós, B. H. Waksman, and A. de Weck. (Pp. xv + 485; 33 figures; 40

tables. £12.10.) Basel: S. Karger A.G. 1971.

The latest volume in this series provides a further collection of detailed, thoughtful reviews on some current immunological problems. The subjects dealt with are antigens common to microbes and mammalian cells, cellular immunology and the graft versus host reaction, antigen recognition by cell receptors, the cellular basis of immunological memory, immune facilitation and enhancement, and chronic hepatitis. Each has been written by an expert in the field and provides an invaluable guide and source of reference for professional immunologists whether they are working on the same subject or simply wish to know what is going on. For general pathologists and clinicians with an interest in immunology there is much useful basic information but they might find it tough going. Except in the hepatitic section clinical implications are dealt with slightly or not at all.

A. A. GLYNN

Selecting a Computer System for the Clinical Laboratory By Marion J. Ball. (Pp. xi + 115. \$14.75.) Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas. 1971.

In this short book the author, who is Assistant Professor in the Department of Medical Physics at Temple University, Philadelphia, passes on in a very assimilable form knowledge that she acquired in the course of examining the problems involved in introducing a computer system in a pathology laboratory embracing clinical chemistry, haematology and blood transfusion work, and microbiology.

After a simple introduction to the necessary technical jargon the reader is exposed to the realities of the present-day situation regarding the advantages and disadvantages of laboratory computer systems, and to experts' views concerning identifiable needs for the future. The wide choice of methods and documents for data input is well illustrated along with alternative formats for computer-produced reports. The effectiveness of on-line data acquisition from laboratory instruments is also discussed together with various approaches to 'peak-picking'. A major section describes and illustrates nine laboratory computer systems which are available in the USA, and their features can be readily compared in a useful summary table. In a briefer chapter advice is given on how to evaluate laboratory

computer systems during an on-site visit. Topics dealt with superficially include the role of the independent computer consultant and the vital need for good laboratory management and full staff involvement. Among five appendices the one which is certain to be of wide interest is that which sets out a specification for a laboratory data processing system. Personal communications are cited throughout the text but a selection of over 200 references, including several in British journals, is given at the end of the book.

This book would equip a newcomer to the field with enough information to enable him to start to communicate with computer scientists and to appreciate why it is necessary to proceed cautiously. Its down-to-earth approach and easy style will make it a particularly attractive primer for the pathology trainee, but it can also be confidently recommended to the consultant pathologist and even to administrators who will have to make judgements on alternative solutions to the problems of laboratory data processing. The book is lavishly illustrated and produced to a high standard but unfortunately, like everything else to do with computers, relatively expensive.

F. V. FLYNN

Notice

Pathology Day Release Course

The British Postgraduate Medical Federation in association with its Specialist Institutes and the Association of Clinical Pathologists is offering an advanced course in pathology suitable for candidates for the Final M.R.C.Path. on a day release basis in each of the four specialties. This will be held fortnightly, mainly at the Middlesex Hospital Medical School, in haematology, histopathology, chemical pathology, and microbiology from September 1972 to May 1973.

The fee for each of the four courses will be £35 which junior hospital staff may reclaim from their employing authority when applying for study leave under the conditions set out in the terms and conditions of service for NHS staff and in HM 67(27) and HM 68(50).

Refreshments will be available on payment in the Refectory at the Middlesex Hospital Medical School.

Application to register for the course should be made, stating clearly which of the courses is desired. At the same time applicants are advised to make arrangements with their employing authority for study leave.

A cheque for £35, made payable to the British Postgraduate Medical Federation, should accompany each application and be forwarded to the British Postgraduate Medical Federation, 33 Millman Street, London, WC1N 3EJ.