Book reviews


Every histopathologist who delights in beautiful colours, forms, and patterns will enjoy looking at the illustrations in this atlas. They are nearly all of an extremely high standard and many are quite arresting to the eye. Stains other than haematoxylin and eosin have been used extensively to good effect and the electron micrographs are excellent and instructive. Figure 99 illustrates the care and trouble taken in preparation. It shows fibrin threads and thrombocytes, metallically shadowed in perfect, almost three-dimensional clarity at a magnification of 3000, but also includes an inset of a single fibre with distinct crossbands at a magnification of 100,000. As the contents cover general and special pathology, including some aspects of haematology, there has been considerable selection.

The texts to the figures are often difficult to understand and some key information is almost impossible to extract. For instance, on page 12 fig 11 is a beautiful electron micrograph of a normal mouse liver cell with 21 black or white numbers almost randomly scattered over the photograph and very difficult to locate. On the next page is figure 12 which is a diagram of a normal cell. Unfortunately the distribution of the organelles, and hence the numbering, in the diagram is quite different from the photograph. Thus one spends most of one’s time trying to locate the correct numbers and places. To add to the confusion the diagram has a few more numbers than the electron micrograph.

The general text is in rather small type with many words and sentences in italics. The rationale for the italics is not always clear. With more than half the pages devoted to illustrations the whole of tissue and cellular pathology can only be dealt with very sketchily. Even so, with only 30 pages devoted to general pathology, it is surprising to see tumours disposed of in three and a half lines.

Eight pages of ‘selected references’ at the back of the book is mainly composed of standard textbooks, monographs, and references to original descriptions. There appear to be no references later than 1967 and, for example, Muir’s Textbook, 8th edition, 1965, is listed although the 9th edition came out in 1971.

Because of its expense the undergraduate and postgraduate is recommended to borrow the book from a library and look at the superb illustrations. The teacher in pathology could also find it useful for illustrating in small group tutorials.

E. A. WRIGHT


This fascicle is a splendid addition to the ‘Second Series’ of the AFIP Atlas of Tumour Pathology. As Dr Kernohan and Dr Sayre comment in their foreword, it could well be considered a textbook of tumours of the central nervous system, since Dr Rubenstein’s presentation is far more comprehensive than a mere collection of photographs. Certainly the fascicle contains over 400 illustrations, including 15 colour plates, depicting gross and microscopic pathology, and the quality of these illustrations is uniformly excellent; but there is also an extensive text in which the author describes tumour pathology in detail, and also discusses questions of histogenesis, terminology, classification, and prognosis. Consideration is also given to diagnostic ‘traps’ which may mislead the pathologist who is studying biopsy material. A final section considers special staining methods which may be of diagnostic value in the histological and cytological examination of neoplasms of the central nervous system; technical details of the staining procedures are not given, but the merits of the various methods are discussed. The bibliography is arranged conveniently as lists of references at the end of each section dealing with a particular tumour type, and the index lists authors’ names as well as pathological states.

This excellent monograph represents a major contribution to the literature on neuro-oncology.

N. F. C. GOWING

Current Research in Oncology 1972

This book is based on eight lectures delivered at the National Institute of Health, Bethesda, in January 1972. The choice of topics is wide, covering aetiology, epidemiology, pathogenesis, and therapy of cancer. Each subject is discussed by a leading investigator in the field and the standard of presentation is, for the most part, good. The book contains a wealth of up-to-date information and the prompt publication (May 1973) is a welcome feature—though an index should have been included. Generally recommended.

RICHARD CARTER


1973 is a bumper year for new books about Hodgkin’s disease. The National Cancer Institute monograph no. 36 reports the proceedings of a conference held in March 1972, dealing with all aspects of the subject from epidemiology, through virology, immunology, and pathology, to the clinical applications in diagnosis, staging, and treatment. An important book of reference for the Hodgkinologist. The general pathologist will probably be content to buy one of the two newly published books.

H. E. M. KAY


In this new edition Professor Brewer has incorporated the most important of the
many recent advances in renal pathology. The plan of the book is virtually the same as its predecessor, with chapters on the general aspects and limitations of renal biopsy, the normal kidney, nephrotic syndrome, glomerulonephritis, diabetic lesions, pyelonephritis, hypertension, and miscellaneous conditions. The need for thin, good quality sections is emphasized and the inclusion of a short appendix describing the technical methods used in Birmingham is, therefore, particularly welcome.

The chapter on the nephrotic syndrome has been enlarged to include discussion of some of the results of the recent MRC trial. There are good descriptions of membrano-proliferative and 'minimal change' glomerulonephritis, and reference is made to the newly developed methods of quantitative morphometry which are clearly going to become increasingly important in assessing the presence or absence of minor degrees of glomerular hypercellularity and, in particular, in distinguishing between 'minimal change' lesions and proliferative glomerulonephritis.

As in the first edition the text contains many very instructive case histories (all of which have been brought right up to date), and is illustrated by good quality photomicrographs. It is a great pity that a few well chosen electron micrographs have not been included and, also, that immunofluorescent techniques and their results receive only the very briefest of mention.

The book is well produced and reasonably priced and can be recommended as a sound guide in a somewhat confused and confusing field of histopathology.

R. C. B. PUGH

**Blood Disorders due to Drugs and Other Agents**


This book deals mainly with the haematological side effects of drugs, the other agents being benzene and irradiation each of which is dealt with in a separate chapter.

The contributors are all expert in their particular fields and, as would be expected, much detail is given, particularly with regard to metabolic pathways by which certain drugs are thought to cause their effects.

The topics included cover a very wide range of haematological dyscrasias: drug-induced haemolysis, the effects of drugs on enzyme-deficient erythrocytes and the haemoglobinopathies, drug-induced megaloblastosis, aplasia, and chloramphenicol toxicity. The remaining chapters are devoted to agranulocytosis, thrombocytopenia (accompanied by a formidable list of causative agents), and thrombocytopenia.

A useful review of the bleeding complications of anticoagulant therapy is also included.

The book is well produced and eminently readable. Clear illustrations are included, and the references given are both copious and accurate. As an introduction, Professor Girdwood writes a succinct account of the numerous pitfalls from whence may stem an undesirable drug effect, in particular 'iatrogenic' causes. (It would be interesting to know whether intramuscular Coca-Cola for the treatment of anaemia, described under 'unethical conduct', has been found to be efficacious!)

The book will prove invaluable to haematologists and also to physicians faced with problems possibly related to therapy, and there is an excellent index for cross reference in which very many drugs are listed. The book is therefore strongly recommended, although it is perhaps a little expensive.

H. MACD. CLINK

**Medico Legal Investigation of Death**


This is a large, glossy, brand new textbook of forensic pathology from the United States. As the dust cover says, 'this authoritative text is oriented to the homicide investigator and the novice forensic pathologist and embraces all aspects of the pathology of trauma as it is witnessed daily by law enforcement officers, interpreted by pathologists of varying experiences in forensic pathology...'. It is written by 14 contributors, all of whom are obviously writing from extensive first-hand experience and there will be few pathologists who will not find in it some aspect of violence new to them. The text is very practical, and is mainly concerned with violent death and the interpretation of postmortem findings; there is little about the theoretical aspects of forensic medicine and some of the more problematic subjects, such as the diagnosis of asphyxia, are rather skirted around.

An outstanding feature is the vast number of photographs. They are detailed, well produced, and quite riveting.

From decomposed children in refrigerators to men in chains and women's clothing, nothing is spared. After a little while one begins to think that perhaps Casper was justified when in his famous 19th century textbook he refused to describe certain 'unnatural forms of lewdness', writing: 'the sacred interests of science would justify me in more minutely describing what I have learned as to these matters, but the still more sacred interests of morality forbid me to enlarge upon them.' In this book they would not only be described but probably photographed as well. Most of the illustrations are accompanied by a potted case history which often seems only to add morbid interest rather than to illustrate any principle and confirms the sometimes voiced criticism that forensic pathology is more anecdotal than scientific. However, perhaps we should accept the statement of the writer of the foreword: 'we should not faint at the photographs. They are true and while all truth may not seem beauty, all truth can strengthen our humanity.' Nevertheless, although a photograph of a middle-aged chronic alcoholic dentist sitting naked and dead in his dental chair, having bled to death from an accidental cut on his head, may perhaps strengthen one's humanity, it does not add much to scientific knowledge.

Overstatement of the obvious is one of the pitfalls of the characteristic thoroughness of the American approach, and makes this book heavy going. Many of the deductions made in forensic pathology are a matter of straightforward common-sense but others depend upon the sheer weight of experience. One way to gain experience is to read of the experiences of others and if only for this reason the book is of undoubted importance to practising forensic pathologists.

A. C. HINT