Letter to the Editor

Malignant Haemangioendothelioma Involving the Liver

I read with interest the article by Pollard and Millward-Sadler (*J. clin. Path.*, 1974, **27**, 214-221).

Concerning possible aetiological relationships, it is to be noted that seven cases of angiosarcoma (malignant haemangioendothelioma) of the liver have been diagnosed among individuals employed at a local vinyl chloride polymerization plant.

The first case was diagnosed in April 1964, and two recent cases in February 1974. Four additional cases of liver fibrosis with sinusoidal cell activity have been documented histologically. All individuals had close and prolonged contact with the vinyl chloride polymerization process.

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Correction

The signature given to the review of 'The Spread of Tumours in Human Body' by R. A. Willis (*J. clin. Path.*, 1974, **27**, 432-433) is incorrect. It should be A. Levene.

Book reviews

General Pathology By J. B. Walter and M. S. Israel. (Pp. x + 681; illustrated. £10·00.) Edinburgh and London: Churchill Livingstone. 1974.

Publication of the fourth edition of Walter and Israel is an occasion to pause and admire the temerity of the two authors who dared not only to span such an immense subject but have striven ever since to keep the contents up to date. One formula would have been to stick to broad principles and well chosen examples, giving references as needed to more detailed sources, but that is not their way. Indeed the outstanding characteristic of the book is the sheer quantity of factual detail that is compressed into 680 pages. This has the merit that the student will usually find some mention of any topic he runs across but the compression may be such as to confuse hopelessly. For example, what is one to make out of the following (p. 170)? 'Curiously enough, although the delayed-type hypersensitivity which develops during an infection with the tubercle bacillus is specific, the increased phagocytic activity of the macrophages which accompanies it is much less specific. The cellular immunity is effective against many micro-organisms, and is not specific for the tubercle bacillus that induced it. Indeed, this is the basis for giving BCG in an attempt to control malignant disease. Anergy, indicating a lack of cell-mediated responses, can lead to an increased susceptibility to infection: measles has a reputation for reactivating a tuberculous infection.'

Here are a number of tenuously related observations and hypotheses not all well founded. In fairness to the authors the next sentence, 'It is evident that the interrelationship between delayed-type hypersensitivity, cell-bound antibodies and immunity is poorly understood' illustrates the honesty of the book in admitting ignorance—a virtue much appreciated by students.

Another virtue is the wealth of recent references in some sections, but elsewhere there are important gaps. Thus in the chapter on ionizing radiation only three of 28 references are dated after 1965 and so we are told 'It is doubtful whether any of our present treatments of cancer can be regarded as producing a "cure", if by this is meant the complete eradication of all malignant cells'. Persistence of this view might still prevent the proper eradicative treatment of many tumours such as nephroblastoma, seminoma, and childhood leukaemia.

Let us hope the fifth edition will correct such lapses, since it seems fairly certain that the book will retain its popularity for some years to come.

H. E. M. KAY

Handbook of Forensic Pathology By Abdullah Fatteh (Pp. xxi + 349; illustrated. £11·00.) Philadelphia, Toronto: J. B. Lippincott Company. Oxford: Blackwell Scientific Publications. 1973.

There has recently been a small spate of new books on forensic pathology, written by experienced and practical pathologists. They are very much concerned with the morbid anatomy of medico-legal work, and quite different from the traditional British volumes on forensic medicine or medical jurisprudence. Professor Fatteh's is one of the smaller books, but covers similar topics to the larger recent works.

Much of what is said should be well known to anyone engaged in forensic pathology, some of it describes the personal techniques of the author, and much is self-evident. 'If the pedestrian is hit while standing, the impact on the left side of the body results in tearing of the left side of the trousers . . . If the pedestrian is hit on the right side while crossing a road a converse picture results.' Well, perhaps someone somewhere might find that sort of statement useful.

On the credit side there are some useful tables, eg, on osteology, an interesting chapter on the negative necropsy, some valuable details of necropsy and toxicological findings in poisoning by a number of modern drugs, and a few simple (if potentially misleading) toxicological tests 'for pathologists'.

A. C. HUNT

Advanced Haematology Edited by Richard G. Huntsman and George C. Jenkins. (Pp. ix + 162; illustrated. £2·50.) London: Butterworths Ltd. 1974.

In the preface the editors state that 'each contributor was asked to imagine that he was explaining a particular topic to a postgraduate trainee haematologist or to an experienced technologist'. As is known by any lecturer who has had the dubious pleasure of addressing 'mixed' audiences,