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.

EDWARD J. FADELL
Pathologist,
Evangelical Hospital,
P.O. Box 843,
Louisville, Ky. 40201
USA

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 eradication of 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. K.

Handbook of Forensic Pathology By Abdullah Fattah (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 Fattah'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,

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.

a good balance is often difficult to achieve and this book reflects this difficulty. The book is based on a lecture series given at the London Hospital, and the sections vary from the clinical (Management of sickle-cell syndromes, Prevention of Rh sensitization in pregnancy) to the scientific (Vitamin B₁₂-folate interrelations, Control of red cell oxygen affinity by 2, 3 DPG in disease). Other sections cover the problem of red cell membrane defects, fibrinolysis, methaemoglobinaemia, transferrin, and haemochromatosis.

The references are curtailed to adhere to the wishes of the editors but cover recent review articles and key references.

In general this is a useful, and, by today's standards, inexpensive, book, and represents good value, particularly to the trainee haematologist with examinations to face.

R. J. GUYER

Nucleus Cytoplasm 3rd ed. By Henry Harris. (Pp. xiv + 186; illustrated. Bd £4.20; Ppr £1.90.) Oxford: Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press. 1974.

The clue to the appreciation of Henry Harris's book is his quotation from Robert Frost:

'Two roads diverged in a wood and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference'
So his account of molecular biology is

very much a personal one, argued lucidly but with the persuasiveness and methods of an advocate. Readers beware! but do not ignore this entertaining and instructive book.

Since the first edition molecular biology has progressed as is particularly noticeable in the chapter on 'The search for the messenger'. Here we can see that the roads have inevitably converged again.

H. E. M. KAY

Modern Microscopy: Elementary Theory and Practice By C. F. A. Culling (Pp. xii + 148; illustrated. £1.50.) London: Butterworths Ltd. 1974.

This little book is intended by the author to fulfil the need for a complete, yet concise, practical textbook on microscopy and to diminish the lack of knowledge of the subject by most of the users of the instrument. On the whole, he has succeeded in his first objective. However, one doubts whether the second aim, however desirable, will be fulfilled, since the majority of those who handle microscopes so unscientifically are unlikely to take the trouble to learn how to improve matters.

The book has soft covers, but is very well printed with good illustrations and diagrams. It is full of useful basic information, such as the difference between magnification and resolution, and such information is clearly presented. The

author begins by discussing the optics and construction of a compound microscope. After very brief sections on the comparison microscope, the dissecting microscope and dark-ground microscopy, fluorescence microscopy and fluorescent antibody-staining techniques are dealt with most thoroughly. There are also useful chapters on polarizing, phase-contrast, and interference microscopy. A section on photomicrography presents theoretical aspects lucidly but is probably not of great practical use. The book ends by mentioning the electron microscope and giving a few recipes for fixatives, etc. The reviewer feels that this chapter could well be omitted in any future edition: it is too short (12 pages) to give any impression of a vast and complex subject and it would be preferable to entitle the volume 'Modern light microscopy'.

There are a few small errors in the text (the reviewer is not quite sure what a 'per prism' is!), some illustrations are unnecessary, and others are not referred to in the script. The author has his own view of the English language and seems completely undaunted by the split infinitive. Nevertheless, this is an excellent practical manual and is priced most reasonably. It could be read with great benefit by all who are about to embark on light microscopy and, probably, by many established users of the microscope.

A. J. SALSBUURY