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on the physics of laser production, and one on the types of laser currently available. Time will tell just how useful this treatment modality will be in the management of a variety of benign and malignant skin conditions.

A particularly attractive feature of the layout in this series is the placing of the references at the foot of the page carrying the relevant statement. This allows generous referencing without the tedious thumbing to the end of each chapter as one reads. The book is recommended. By current publishing standards it is reasonable value for money.

RONA M MACKIE

**Clinical Biochemistry.** Contemporary Theories and Techniques. Vol 3. Ed Herbert E Spiegel. (Pp 271; \$42.00.) Academic Press. 1984.

This book touches on the laboratory specialties of clinical biochemistry, microbiology, haematology, and immunology. Its broad coverage coupled with limitations of space mean that many of the descriptions are superficial. It is difficult to know for whom it is intended.

Two chapters are particularly concerned with clinical biochemistry; biochemical monitoring of cancer, and instrumentation in clinical chemistry. The former provides a clear, reasonably comprehensive and balanced coverage of a frequently reviewed subject. The latter review attempted an impossible task within the space available, and is in any case already three years out of date.

The interests of microbiologists account for chapters on chemical and physiochemical approaches to detecting and identifying causes of infection, and on serologic methods of diagnosis. However, modern biochemical techniques still only have a supportive role in microbiology. Both chapters would have benefited from greater use of diagrams, and more attention should have been paid to costs, especially of kit methods.

Haemoglobin structure and the haemoglobinopathies make up another chapter, and there is a distinctly selective review of monoclonal antibodies in clinical investigations. Both these subjects have been extensively reviewed elsewhere, and the monoclonal antibody field is moving fast.

All in all, I regret to say that this expensive book is of questionable value for money.

LG WHITBY

**Viruses and Demyelinating Diseases.** Ed CA Mims, ML Cuzner, and RE Kelly. (Pp 201; £22.50.) Academic Press. 1984.

This multiple author book is based on a symposium organised by the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Edinburgh, September 1982.

For many years viruses have been invoked in the aetiology of multiple sclerosis. The principal aim of these proceedings was therefore to review the current situation by considering, amongst other things, animal models of demyelination, antibody induced modulation of virus antigens, and defective replication and persistence of viruses in the central nervous system. There is also a very interesting review of the effect of chemical injury on oligodendrocytes.

Even though no virus or virus like agents or aetiologically significant antiviral antibodies have been identified, it is still thought that the most unifying hypothesis about multiple sclerosis has to do with virus infections in the central nervous system that trigger demyelination either as a 'by-stander' effect or as a specific immune response.

This book gives a clear and up to date account of a complex subject and raises the distinct hope that a clear understanding of the pathogenesis of multiple sclerosis will become available in the not too distant future. It is therefore strongly recommended to neurologists, pathologists with an interest in the nervous system, and all neuroscientists.

DI GRAHAM

**The Biochemical Effects of Drugs in Pregnancy.** Vol 2. A Onnis and P Grella. (Pp 493; £45.) John Wiley. 1984.

The same team have produced a Volume 1 covering drugs acting on the nervous, cardiovascular, and haematopoietic systems. These books have been designed as reference books on the use of therapeutic drugs in pregnancy for "clinicians" which should include those in laboratory medicine. As a reference book it is well compiled. Each entry starts with a single sentence summary of recommendations. Thereafter possible teratogenic effects, pharmacological actions, and effects on human pregnancy and lactation are presented. A summary of animal pharmacology during pregnancy is included. It is emphasised that the information is not absolute and the results of animal experimentation cannot be directly applied to man, although such results

remain our best guide.

The short preface, introduction, and directions for use are good. The individual entries are, on random sampling, useful and well indexed. The bibliography covers the Italian and French as well as the Northern European and English language literature. It should be remembered that the book is primarily a catalogue and not a series of critical reviews. It is also, as admitted, not a comprehensive catalogue.

In laboratory medicine practice, the coincidence of a foeto maternal abnormality and drug administration is a recurrent problem. For such problems this book and, presumably Volume 1 are a useful source of information. The book(s) should therefore be available in libraries directly or indirectly serving those working on obstetric and paediatric problems.

Perhaps the last words should be reassured and can be left to the authors; "In fact there are very few drugs which are able to produce malformations in human pregnancy".

RA HARKNESS

**Special Tumors of the Head and Neck.** Proceedings of the 48th Annual Anatomical Pathology Slide Seminar of the American Society of Clinical Pathologists. John Batsakis and Vincent J Hyams. (Pp 112; paperback \$34.00.) Raven Press. 1984.

This book consists of a discussion of cases from a slide seminar presented at a meeting in 1982. Most of the lesions are rare. Some useful diagnostic problems are reviewed such as those posed by nasal polyps with stromal atypia midfacial neurotising lesions, and fibromyxomatous lesions of the sino nasal tract. The histological appearances of the cases in the light microscope are, for the most part, adequately depicted. The use of additional diagnostic procedures receives surprisingly little attention. The role of the electron microscope is discussed in some cases, but receives little emphasis in others—notably olfactory neuroblastoma. Only one electron microscope photograph is included in the text. Immunohistochemical techniques attract limited comment even though they can be useful in at least 5 of the 25 cases that are discussed—extramedullary plasmacytoma and extranodal lymphoma, metastatic carcinoma of the nasopharynx, embryonal rhabdomyosarcoma, and synoviosarcoma. Publication appears to have been a slow process, and no new references have been added since 1982.

RL CARTER

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