

BOOK REVIEWS

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Self-Assessment in Haematology. C Pallister. (Pp 194; £14.95.) Butterworth Heinemann. 1991. ISBN 0-7506-1216-9

This book comprises two parts: the first consists of graded multiple choice questions and the second case studies where clinical details are supplied together with the laboratory results.

There are 10 multiple choice tests, each containing 20 questions. These have been primarily designed for students of the HNC/D, BSc, Fellowship of the IMLS and MSc courses, but as mentioned in the preface, these questions will be of value to candidates preparing for the MRCPPath examination. The questions cover a wide range of general and specialised aspects of laboratory haematology and the author is to be congratulated on the quality of the questions and the general layout. The answers are accompanied by helpful and relevant comments, together with the titles of textbooks suitable for appropriate further reading.

In the introduction to the section on clinical studies it is stated that a final FIMLS student should expect to score consistently above 80%. This statement reflects the easier standard of clinical knowledge required and may not be so helpful to candidates for the MRCPPath examination as the first section of this book.

This book is very reasonably priced and the first part, especially, is recommended to all who wish to practice self-assessment in haematology.

JOHN D M RICHARDS

Basic Histopathology. A Colour Atlas and Text. 2nd ed. P R Wheater, H G Burkitt, A Stevens, J S Lowe. (Pp 264; 451 illustrations; £24.95.) Churchill Livingstone. 1991. ISBN 0-443-04327-3.

This colour atlas is primarily for use by undergraduates as an aid in practical classes and for their private study. However, I am sure that new postgraduate trainees in pathology, trainee surgeons, and MLSO staff would all find this atlas useful. The text is concise and relevant, simplifying complex pathology well without producing inaccuracies. The four authors devote about a third of the atlas to basic pathological processes, the remaining two thirds covering sys-

temic pathology—about 10 pages per system. The colour photomicrographs are generally of a very high standard, are clearly labelled, and usually relate to text on the same page. Many of the illustrations have black letters superimposed over specific areas such as MM for muscularis mucosae, etc, and this is undoubtedly helpful for the complete novice.

The balance of text and illustration is good and the authors have refrained from illustrating too many rarities “just because they have an excellent example” which is a fault with some other atlases. This atlas is in direct competition with the *Colour Atlas of Histopathology* (R C Curran, published by Harvey Miller) and is a very similar price. *Basic Histopathology* is shorter and has fewer illustrations, and I would favour this atlas for the undergraduate student. Curran's atlas has slightly more depth for the young pathologist.

ARCHIE J MALCOLM

Diagnostic Immunology Laboratory Manual. RJ Harbeck, PC Giclas. (Pp 346; soft cover \$69.00.) Raven Press. 1991. ISBN 0-88167-811-2.

This is a laboratory manual intended for use in laboratories where diagnostic immunology tests are performed. It has been designed for technicians and laboratory scientists to use at the bench and provides details of both the techniques and difficulties which may arise when performing these tests. It is clear and detailed, with good section headings and excellent comments.

The content is somewhat uneven: 118 pages are devoted to complement assays and only one to the detection of autoantibodies. Although IgG subclass measurements by ELISA are described in some detail, little discussion of the measurement of total immunoglobulins is given. Immunoelectrophoresis is described in the context of C3 breakdown products, but not in relation to its more common use in detecting paraproteins. Although sections on standards and controls are given for each method, some of the recommendations for determining normal ranges are bizarre. Quality control is mentioned only in the section on lymphocyte phenotyping which is unfortunate, given the plethora of quality control schemes, both national and international. It is disappointing that there is little clinical interpretation.

In United Kingdom clinical immunology laboratories this manual will be seen as incomplete. Laboratories wanting to start complement assays will find the first third of the book invaluable. For those looking for a more balanced view, it will be disappointing. At £35.00 it is good value provided this imbalance is appreciated.

H CHAPEL

Handbook of Serodiagnosis in Infectious Diseases. R Matthews, J Burnie. (Pp 220; £37.50.) Butterworth Heinemann 1991. ISBN 0-7506-1343-2.

This is essential reading for anyone involved in the diagnosis of infection. There are two

parts to the book. The first and major part is taken up with methodology. It begins with the basic techniques of agglutination, complement fixation, and then concludes with the latest in diagnostic techniques—immunoblotting, cloning of microbial antigens, preparation of mouse monoclonals, DNA probes and PCR. Each chapter contains a full description of the technique, interpretation of results, and the drawbacks. An especially useful section is entitled “troubleshooting dot-immunoblotting” covering such problems as low transfer efficiency, patchy or diffused transfer, excessive current, absent or weak staining reactions and high background. Remedies for these problems are given. The chapter on monoclonal antibodies gives a detailed account of the techniques used to produce one's own murine monoclonal antibodies. This first part of the book closes with a chapter on the procedures involved in optimising PCR for diagnostic purposes and illustrating the applications of PCR to the detection of several infectious agents. The second and condensed part concentrates on the diagnosis of infectious diseases by serodiagnosis. It is conveniently split into three chapters—bacterial, viral, and fungal infections. But why no chapter on protozoal infections, an infectious scourge in many parts of the world? Such a chapter would have been of more value and interest than regurgitating the various well worn methods for diagnosing syphilis. Apart from this minor criticism, I found this book easy to read, well set out, with much to commend it.

R C SPENCER

Atlas of Medical Helminthology and Protozoology. 3rd ed. GD Cowan. (Pp 88; 121 illustrations; £30.) Churchill Livingstone. 1991. ISBN 0 443 04093 1.

Having just returned from Vellore with several unidentified insect bites, the sight of this volume in the editorial office naturally attracted my attention. I was immediately reassured that I was unlikely to get onchocerciasis or loa loa (wrong country) or guinea worm (wrong vector) but alarmed to learn that, as well as malaria, I might have contracted filariasis (*Wuchereria bancrofti*) or even Kala Azar. I read on. I could not determine from the information provided what type of malaria I might have, as no geographical distribution of the different parasites is given (though little maps are drawn for many other parasites, so this seems odd). All I could do, I decided, was to wait for the symptoms to appear, get a stained film, and then use the lovely illustrations to identify the parasite on morphological grounds. Then I began to worry about amoebiasis. Again, no indication whether I was more likely to have picked it up than if I had been to Scarborough (possibly not), but given a microscope and an unstained wet stool specimen I would easily be able to recognise the difference between *Entamoeba histolytica* and *Entamoeba coli*.

In summary, this is a large format picture book with much useful information and many beautiful drawings (not photographs). It is more than a coffee-table volume, but would not do as a reference work, nor does it pretend to be one. The three-part format of the original edition has been lost and now the work is simply divided into the two logical