

Book reviews

If you wish to order, or require further information regarding, the titles reviewed here, please write or telephone the BMJ Bookshop, PO Box 295, London WC1H 9TE. Tel: 071 383 6244. Fax: 071 383 6662. Books are supplied post free in the UK and for British Forces Posted Overseas addresses. Overseas customers should add 15% for postage and packing. Payment can be made by cheque in sterling drawn on a UK bank, or by credit card (MasterCard, VISA, or American Express) stating card number, expiry date, and your full name. The price and availability are occasionally subject to revision by the Publishers.)

Guidelines for Quality Assurance Programmes for Blood Transfusion Services. (Pp 50; soft cover Sw Fr 12) World Health Organization. 1993. ISBN 92-4-1544481.

This new WHO publication deals with the important subject of quality assurance in blood transfusion practice for both transfusion centres and hospitals.

This short manual is clearly and concisely written. It outlines the systematic application of quality assurance measures to all aspects of blood transfusion practice from the collection of blood from the donor to transfusion of the right component to the right patient. It also emphasises the importance of staff training, effective management, and audit.

This is a consensus opinion of experts and provides authoritative information and guidance. The publication could have been improved by including the names of the contributors.

AH WATERS

The Skin. Vol 9. Systemic Pathology. 3rd edn. Ed D Weedon. Series Editor W StC Symmers. (Pp 1100; 634 illustrations; £155.) Churchill Livingstone. 1992. ISBN 0-443-03201-7.

Not so long ago you had a copy of "Lever" for the skin biopsies and that was it. Over the past few years we have seen several good books of skin pathology appear, each differing in style and extent, ranging from McKee's large full colour text to my own "core curriculum" book of manageable size. Lever is sadly no longer with us so who will replace him?

In the second edition of "Symmers" the skin was presented as a large chapter developed from Milne's small text beloved of trainees 20 years ago. Now in the third edition David Weedon has produced a much expanded contribution, with 40 chapters.

The book is very good. Wallpaper matching has been facilitated by grouping conditions according to their "reaction pattern": conditions that look similar but have different causes are described together. This approach is very advantageous. The problem with "Lever" was that you had to know the answer before you could look it up. Here, you have a good chance of finding the correct differential diagnosis if you can iden-

tify the basic type of process.

The book is large but has managed to maintain a reasonably uniform standard throughout. The chapters are organised in a logical order. Most of the figures are good, although some appear a little small where they have been fitted into the double column format of the pages. The emphasis is on pathology, with no clinical pictures included. Plentiful references are given, extending up to 1990 in most chapters. So is this the new "Lever"? Quite possibly. It is certainly a very well produced and comprehensive text that should find a place in all histopathology departments.

N KIRKHAM

The Light Microscope. Its Use and Development. WG Hartley. (Pp 360; £40.) Senecio Publishing Company. 1993. ISBN 0-906831-05-9.

The author of this volume is a scholar and well known to the microscope community in England. He approaches his subject from the point of view of the instrument and all its components in all possible modes of construction and use, rather than from the point of view of the user in any specific area.

I have the impression that the book is written for the author rather than for the reader, but it will, nevertheless, be read with considerable interest by anyone who understands the true value of historical research. If it is even marginally true that everything has been done before, that most discoveries are rediscoveries, and that human behaviour is rather repetitious, then please read this book to obtain some good hints on how to do better with your own area of microscopic investigation.

This volume will definitely not be of interest to anyone who simply looks down a routine microscope purchased as a package from a modern manufacturer for routine examination of specimens which, for all that each comes from a biologically unique individual, are much the same.

Much of the material is repetitious—interesting for showing that the current vogue for multi-author volumes does not actually demand more than one author. The degree of repetition is such that individual chapters can be delved into without missing reference to some of the authors' favourite themes, among which we can detect strong opinions regarding the inevitability of the decline and collapse of the British microscope manufacturing industry. More importantly, we are continuously reminded of the utility of oblique illumination in improving visibility and resolution. It used to be easy to achieve oblique illumination in standard monocular microscopes, but this is difficult with modern binocular heads and condenser arrangements. A recent microscope design has achieved the same and it will be interesting to see how it is accepted.

Other important, take-home messages in this volume are that resolution is nothing like so important as the ability to scan large amounts of material. Central, perfect resolution is sacrificed in broad, flat-field designs, but surveying possibilities are dramatically increased: this is what matters to the routine user. For anyone going beyond routine use, understanding the function of the microscope is indispensable and this volume will be welcome as an introduction to historical research in the field. It is only a

pity that the style of references is more akin to that used by classical historians than to the modern scientific style.

ALAN BOYDE

Comparative Primate Pathology. GBD Scott. (Pp 288; £65.) Oxford University Press 1992. ISBN 0-19-857640-4.

This book encapsulates the interest of a medically trained morbid anatomist in the pathology of non-human primates. The monograph is described as a comparison of the pathologies of primates and humans, and is largely based on the author's personal review of accessioned pathology material from zoological collections in the UK and USA, and from the Yerkes Primate Center in Atlanta.

The first chapter is a personal statement on the nature and value of comparative pathology. I think there is much in this chapter that is contentious to veterinary pathologists: the lack of recognition of ante-mortem investigation of domesticated and exotic animals does less than justice to the improvements that have taken place in veterinary clinical pathology, particularly as practised in North America. The other early chapters, on zoological aspects of primatology, growth and development, and ageing, are useful introductions to these topics.

The main part of the book deals with general and systemic pathology, primarily from the perspective of human disease, with additional information provided for primate lesions reviewed by the author, or quoted from other publications. A valuable feature of this book is the reference to necropsy numbers that should permit easy access to the data recorded by the original veterinary pathologist. The author's thoroughness in this detail is not always matched by accuracy in personal and institutional attributions.

How valuable is this book, and how well does it meet the author's aspiration to form "a comprehensive, balanced review of the pathology of simian primates . . ." For the veterinary pathologist developing an interest in primate pathology, this book will provide part of a useful introduction to what is (or was) common in primates kept in zoological collections. The treatment of general pathology is necessarily brief in such a short publication and the critical pathologist (both veterinary and medical) will find more satisfactory written and photographic material in standard text books. Pathologists working with primates as experimental animals in biomedical research will need broader and deeper sources of published and unpublished information than is included here.

This monograph deserves recognition as the labour of love of a pathologist with a broadly based interest in disease across several primate species. The late Professor Scott's collection of observations will be useful to a range of workers concerned with disease of those related, but different, species. The enthusiasm of the author makes the book an enjoyable piece of reading for any pathologist with an interest in more than one species.

DF KELLY

Atlas of Endometriosis. Ed Dan C Martin. (Price: £40.00.) Gower Medical Publishing. 1993. ISBN 1-56375-547-5.

According to its preface, this book was assembled for clinicians who are students of endometriosis, with the aim of stimulating new clinical and basic research in this field. Written by a group of eminent gynaecologists with not a pathologist among them, it is divided into 17 chapters and lavishly illustrated throughout with good quality photographs. The first few chapters review the early published findings and emphasise the varied macroscopic appearance of endometriotic lesions which the author attempts to put in the context of disease progression. Later chapters discuss endometriosis by site. The chapter on microscopic endometriosis is unaccountably illustrated by scanning electron micrographs. The authors' tenuous grasp of pathology is further exemplified by the assertion that peritoneal haemangiomas "have an epithelial lining with no evidence of endometrial glands or stroma".

Overall, I found this book slight and uninformative. Totally lacking in any new insights, it is unlikely to be of any interest to serious students of endometriosis. Furthermore, it is pervaded by a sense of sanctimonious piety expressed in prolix, unclear, and frequently ungrammatical prose. I would not recommend it.

SM ISMAIL

Paediatric Neoplasia. S Variend. **Current Histopathology.** Vol 22. (Pp 124; £95.) Kluwer Academic Publishers Group. 1993. ISBN 0-7923-8900-X.

There is much useful information in this slim volume, and whilst the quality of some of the illustrations might be improved, the point they make is generally easily discerned. Because of its brevity and portability, it would make a useful introduction to paediatric tumours. As a bench manual for the experienced histopathologist seeking help with the difficult case, however, its value is more questionable. There is a tendency for modern atlases to move away from the mere collection of illustrations of "typical examples" to manuals where both the text and the pictures examine points of differential diagnosis and practical problem solving. In this volume differential diagnosis tends to be lists rather than explanations as to how differentiation might be achieved. We are told, for example, that congenital mesoblastic nephroma may resemble clear cell sarcoma, and that failure to distinguish them may be disastrous, but we are not told how this might be done. The section on lymphomas is not well illustrated and gives little indication of how the simple classification used relates to those more generally used in adult pathology.

More help in the interpretation of small biopsy specimens, and particularly instruction on the changes that affect the histology of paediatric tumours following chemotherapy would be valuable, because these specimens probably form the majority of those seen in current practise.

Despite these criticisms, I am sure the book will find a place in training departments, and for the instruction of clinicians dealing with childhood tumours.

RA RISDON

Microbiology—Colour Guide. TJ Inglis and AP West. (Pp 137; 194 illustrations; £7.95.) Churchill Livingstone. 1993. ISBN

0-443-03972-0.

This small paperback successfully combines good quality photographs with succinct text to produce a handy teaching and revision aid. Although aimed at medical students and postgraduates preparing for examinations, it would be equally valuable to other students of medical microbiology.

The book starts with what many in the laboratory would agree is the most important aspect for clinicians to understand—the need for an appropriate specimen and a request form containing relevant information. It then summarises what happens when "MC&S" is requested. After the basic methods have been described there is a systematic review of specimens needed, the laboratory investigation, and the possible findings in the major clinical infection groups.

Although the emphasis is on bacteriology, the basic elements of infection control, virology, parasitology and mycology are covered. Text is clear, short, and often in note form. The captions generally aid the interpretation of the photographs, although those for the illustrations of blood stained cerebrospinal fluid seem to have been transposed.

The 170 photographs are of a very high standard, and although some are perhaps a little too small, they demonstrate clearly what the authors wish to show.

The combination of the quality of the photographs, the carefully written text, and the low price make this book very good value. It will not only prove useful to those taking examinations but could be used in other teaching situations.

DN PETTS

Immunofluorescence. Antigen Detection Techniques in Diagnostic Microbiology. Ed EO Caul. (Pp 196; soft cover, £19.95.) Cambridge University Press. 1993. ISBN 0-521-44897-2.

This monograph provides a valuable addition to the series produced by the Public Health Laboratory Service and written by experts in the field from laboratories throughout the country. The introductory chapters cover the principles of immunofluorescence microscopy and production of monoclonal antibodies. An excellent chapter on the techniques and practical aspects of obtaining good respiratory specimens from patients follows.

The remainder of the book is devoted to diagnosis covering respiratory viruses and organisms, such as CMV, *Pneumocystis carinii*, and fungal infections, which have become increasingly important in recent years with the advent of transplantation and treatment of immune deficient and immune suppressed patients. The inclusion of organisms of public health importance—*Listeria* and *Cryptococcus*—highlights some of the advances that have been made in diagnosis since the first PHLS monograph on immunofluorescence. Some chapters include useful epidemiological data from the Communicable Diseases Surveillance Centre, but this is based on diagnoses made by all methodologies and does not indicate the impact that immunofluorescence has had on rapid diagnosis. The inclusion of comparative data on commercial kits and their source of supply is a valuable addition to many of the chapters.

The editor's caveat is particularly apt:

"There is no substitute for expertise and laboratory workers are encouraged to gain as much experience as possible before applying these rapid techniques". Reference to the monograph whilst at the bench will prove an invaluable guide to achieving this goal.

D CUBITT

Notices

Medical Screening: The Way Forward

Medical screening provides many opportunities for the prevention of disease and handicap. What can it offer and what are its limitations? Based on several case studies, *Medical Screening: The Way Forward*, organised jointly by the *BMJ* and *Journal of Medical Screening* is a one day conference to be held on 26 January 1994, at the QE2 Conference Centre, London, to examine the medical, scientific, ethical, social, psychological and economic aspects of screening.

For more information contact: Pru Walters, BMA Conference Unit, BMA House, Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9JR. Tel: 071-383 6605. Fax: 071-383 6400.

Dermatopathology Update UMDS St Thomas's Campus, London

Friday 21 January 1994

For further details and programme please contact: Dr P H McKee, Department of Histopathology, St Thomas's Hospital, London SE1 7EH. Tel: 071-929 9292 (ext. 2039). Fax: 071-401 3661.

Association of Clinical Pathologists Junior Membership

Junior membership of the Association is available to medical practitioners who have been engaged in the practice of pathology for a period of less than four years. Junior members are able to remain in this category for a maximum of six years or on the attainment of consultant status. The annual subscription is £34 for those resident in the United Kingdom and £65 for those overseas. The annual subscription may be claimed against tax.

Junior members receive the *Journal of Clinical Pathology* each month. Other benefits are reduced registration fees to attend ACP scientific meetings, all the documents regularly sent to full members of the Association including *ACP News*, which has a regular column for juniors, and the twice yearly summary of pathology courses included in the ACP programme of postgraduate education. Junior members have their own representative body, the Junior Members' Group, which has a direct input to Council.

For Junior Membership apply to: The Honorary Secretary, Association of Clinical Pathologists, 221 Preston Road, Brighton BN1 6SA. (0273) 561188.