Book reviews

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Human Toxoplasmosis. Ed Do Ho-Yen, AWL Joss. (Pp 265; £27.50) Oxford University Press. 1992. ISBN 0 19 854750 1.

Toxoplasma gondii is increasingly being recognised as an important cause of morbidity and mortality in man, particularly in persons with impaired immunity such as AIDS patients, transplant recipients, or congenitally infected babies.

This book has been written by six members of the Scottish Toxoplasma Reference Laboratory in Inverness and edited by its director, Dr Darrel Ho-Yen, and Dr Alex Joss. It is well written and contains many helpful, clear diagrams and illustrations. Although it is principally written for medical practitioners and other healthcare staff, those with little knowledge of science or medicine would find the book useful and interesting. In particular, the three chapters dealing with infection in pregnancy, diagnosis, and treatment would be useful to anyone interested in congenital infection. The management options for preventing or minimising infection in pregnancy and for dealing with pregnant women with acute *T. gondii* infection are clearly laid out. There is an excellent appendix at the back of the book with answers to common questions asked in pregnancy which draws on the considerable clinical experience of the staff of the Scottish Toxoplasma Reference Laboratory.

Other chapters deal competently with history and general epidemiology, life cycle and animal infection, clinical features, infection in immunocompromised patients, new techniques and the future.

I thoroughly enjoyed reading this book and I would regard it as a "must" for any healthcare professional who is interested in this organism. I have only one small criticism. It is written by the members of one reference laboratory. While this has produced a book with minimal repetition between chapters and good overall uniformity of style, individual chapters have not always been written by experts.

TG WREGHITT

PCR in Situ Hybridization: Protocols and Applications. GJ Nuovo. (Pp 276; \$94.) Raven Press. 1992. ISBN 0-88167-940-2.

This is a curious and disappointing book. Ever since the first descriptions of the poly-

merase chain reaction (PCR), many (including myself) have wished and tried to combine the resolving power of in situ hybridisation (ISH) with the exquisite sensitivity of the PCR. Very few have claimed success, Nuovo and his colleagues being the only group to publish with any frequency. Accordingly, I was anxious to read this book, hoping to find a detailed exposition, with copious practical hints, tips, clues, etc. However, of the 264 pages, only 10 pages (at most) are devoted to a description of the PCR in situ methodology. The rest of the book gives very simple descriptions of the basics of molecular biology, ISH, and the PCR (both standard and hot start). Two chapters discuss two applications of the PCR in situ and there is a small final chapter on reverse transcription PCR in situ. The main practical message is that successful PCR in situ seems to be totally dependent on using hot start PCR.

As can be judged from the preceding paragraph, I think this book is mistitled. Too much of the book is devoted to topics other than PCR in situ. At least two other aspects require comment. One of the interests in PCR in situ is surely in detection and localisation of single copy genes (as in interphase cytogenetics), but Nuovo seems not to have addressed this problem at all, concentrating on intracellular viruses. I find this a curious omission. Furthermore, the chapter on reverse transcription PCR in situ shows not only variation in the intranuclear location of mRNA for different genes, but also, and oddly, complete absence of cytoplasmic mRNA for some. Nuovo suggests that this may be a biological effect, but I would like to be assured that artefact was excluded, particularly since, in theory, the system should detect even one molecule of cytoplasmic mRNA.

In summary, those who wish to have detailed practical advice on how to perform specific, reliable PCR in situ will not find this book of great help. Those who wish a more general overview of the area may find aspects of the book useful.

KA FLEMING

IVIG Therapy Today. Ed Mark Ballow. (Pp 160; \$8950.) The Humana Press Inc 1992. ISBN 0-89603-223-X.

This book sets out to review the role of intravenous immunoglobulin therapy, both as replacement therapy and in the management of "autoimmune" disorders. It is a strange mix of chapters in terms of their approach (review, personal data, hypothesis, anecdote), depth and scope. Balance is evidently lacking, with primary immunodeficiency getting short shrift in 10 pages of rather disappointingly thin text, while more speculative and unproved applications get the lion's share. The best chapters are critical reviews of the use of intravenous immunoglobulin (IVIG) in neonatal infection, in chronic lymphocytic leukaemia, and multiple myeloma, and its clinical use in Kawasaki disease. The chapter on idiopathic purpura (ITP) is disappointingly weak and, startlingly, makes no reference to HIV associated ITP; indeed there is no reference to the role of intravenous immunoglobulin in paediatric or adult AIDS. Most other chapters are haphazard, speculative, and rather uncritical; many of the immunological concepts are superficial and rather glib. Several applications get no mention at all.

There is no detailed discussion of the various different preparations and no analysis of the issue of infective hazard or its apparent lack.

Intravenous immunoglobulin therapy has some clear applications that are understood in some detail and where practical guidance can be given; other areas deserve a critical eye and an ability to separate wheat from chaff, whether in terms of data or hypothesis. One would have thought that a small book on this topic could readily be put together to summarise the state of knowledge of intravenous immunoglobulin therapy today.

ANTHONY J PINCHING

Diseases of the Human Carotid Body. D Heath, P Smith. (Pp 205; 136 figs; DM 254.) Springer. 1992. ISBN 3-540-19687-0.

To most pathologists, the human carotid body is uncharted territory. Some may have located and dissected it out in the run-up to the MRCPath final. In contrast, Professor Heath and his team have, over the past 20 years or so, devoted much time and painstaking effort to the investigation of both its normal structure and pathology. In this volume they present this work in context with that of other groups. They give detailed instructions on dissection and document the changes through fetal life, childhood, adult life and ageing. They discuss the physiology of chemoreception and the localisation and putative functions of both classical and peptide neurotransmitters. The pathology discussed includes responses to hypoxaemia, high altitude, and systemic hypertension, and chemodectomas.

The book presents a wealth of information, although there is a degree of duplication between chapters. Presumably, as the text is also designed to interest clinicians and physiologists, there is occasionally unusual technical detail in areas well known to pathologists (immunocytochemistry). In terms of organisation, the chapters on glomic vasculature and normal ultrastructure might more appropriately have come earlier, before discussion of any pathology.

This is not a routine benchbook. It is, rather, a unique short reference book which includes material useful in more specialised diagnostic practice. I would recommend it to teaching departments so that trainees and consultants alike might dip into it and learn. A more widespread awareness of what is already known might stimulate further studies which will complement those of Heath's group and help elucidate the physiological functions of the carotid body and its response in disease.

ANNE M MCNICOL

Essentials of Exfoliative cytology. G-K Nguyen, TS Kline. (Pp 271; 42.) Williams & Wilkins. 1992. ISBN 0 89640 213 4.

As the authors intended, this book is a concise text which is both informative and a useful review. In the preface, we are told, it is aimed at practising pathologists as well as registrars and cytotechnologists, although the text is more appropriate for those with little experience of cytopathology. The authors have a liberal interpretation of the term "exfoliative" as they also include descriptions of scrape and endoscopic brush