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

samples. There are nine chapters dedicated to the female genital tract and a further seven chapters covering a range of other body systems. On the whole, the book is clearly written, accurate, and easy to read. However, the two final chapters on image analysis and flow cytometry are rather disappointing and a little out of date. For those about to sit examinations, the quiz in the appendix offers the opportunity for rapid revision, but I did find some of the answers rather obscure.

This book would have benefited from colour illustrations. The black and white pictures are generally of a high quality, but they fail to provide the clarity and subtlety of staining pattern necessary to be really useful to the inexperienced reader. Another serious deficiency in the book is the use of the Bethesda system of reporting cervical smears which could lead to confusion and difficulties in interpretation for cytotechnologists in the United Kingdom. Although the authors make an attempt to correlate the Bethesda system with other classifications, they fail to mention dyskaryosis which is the terminology used throughout the United Kingdom. Despite these criticisms, this book is not overpriced and would form a useful addition to departmental cytopathology libraries.

EUPHEMIA MCGOOGAN

ABC of Transfusion. 2nd edn. Marcela A Contreras. (Price UK £12.95, Overseas £14.50.) BMA. 1992. ISBN 0-7279-0754-9.

It is with some discomfort that I have to say I can find nothing to criticise in this short and uncluttered guide to the complete world of transfusion medicine. I mean, there must be *something* wrong with it, but I cannot think what it might be.

The text is lively, concise, up to date, and easy to read. Dogma rules and there are very few references, but this is an asset. The illustrations are liberal and helpful. There are little take-away messages in boxes dotted about the book with such aphorisms as "sick babies are more likely to be transfused than any other patients" or "transfusion of less than two units of red cells is bad clinical practice". Superficially these two comments might seem incompatible, but in the context of the chapters concerned no one is likely to be confused. Quite the reverse.

Who is it for? Definitely students (all shapes and sizes, under and postgraduate), anaesthetists, surgeons and physicians. Haematologists will use it surreptitiously, relieved to have such an easy source of information and guilty that they don't know it all already. In short it is hard to think of any clinical group who will not find it useful. There are even bits relevant to histopathologists. What more can be said?

JS LILLEYMAN

A pathology primer in verse. Leslie H Sobin, 2nd edn. Nomad Press, Washington DC, 1991 (\$US 10).

*To read a pathology text,
One's brain has to keep itself flexed,
So a book all in verse,*

*Might be less of a curse,
Though it makes one ask whatever next.*

*The traditional student may dread it,
But when one has actually read it,
One can say the result
Is amusing, if cult
And one feels Dr S deserves credit.*

Somehow Leslie Sobin has managed to encompass a wide range of pathological observations into five line stanzas along the style of that shown above. This second edition is an expansion of the first, published in 1978. Originally intended as an amusement it does, however, also contain a considerable amount of accurate, factual information. I recommend this inexpensive little book to you as a piece of light reading which may also enhance your recall of pathology!

DR TURNER

Atlas of Gynecologic Histopathology. Eds DS Heller, ML Stone. (Pp 172; illustrations 175; 50.) Churchill Livingstone. 1992. ISBN 0-316-35501-1.

This atlas of gynaecological pathology, according to the authors, aims to present a simple and concise guide to, and review of, the microscopic features of frequently encountered lesions. My immediate reaction on receipt of the book was one of disappointment on finding that the illustrations were all in black and white, rather than colour as is already available in comparable books such as that by Fox and Buckley (MTP Press Ltd). Although the illustrations are on the whole of good quality, there are some which have been underexposed. Equally, some of the original sections, which have been used for illustrative purposes, include microtome knife scores. The contents cover the histopathology of lesions of vulva, vagina, cervix, uterus, fallopian tube, ovary and pregnancy, and also include sections on gynaecological cytology and breast histopathology. The selection of lesions presented is interesting, but I do wonder how many pathologists would regard, for example, a fallopian tube adenocarcinoma as "a frequently encountered lesion". The text which accompanies the illustrations is rather brief and I would have thought to the potential reader would be inadequate for a proper understanding of the lesions being considered.

It is suggested that the book will be of value to trainee gynaecologists and clinicians wishing to review pathology. However, there are many excellent texts with good quality illustrations already available in this field, and I would find it difficult to recommend this particular book to my colleagues.

AJ ROBERTSON

The Royal College of Surgeons of England Atlas of Surgical Pathology. Ed JL Turk, CDM Fletcher. (Pp 300; 1075 illustrations; \$23150.) Raven Press. 1992. ISBN 0-397-44843-0

The Royal College of Surgeons has a long history of commitment to pathology museums, starting with John Hunter's pioneering collection, which by 1941, when

it was devastated by an incendiary bomb, had accumulated 15 000 specimens. The survivors were used to prime the new Wellcome Museum of Pathology which is the source of the 1 075 illustrations in this well produced atlas.

Each illustration has an informative legend, setting it in a clinical context, then describing the appearances and commenting on their meaning. The specimens have been photographed in their containers, which, because of judicious cropping, intrude as little as possible into the illustrations; but some are marred by scratched perspex.

It could be argued that a modern atlas of surgical pathology should be illustrated with fresh unfixed specimens rather than the rather tired-looking faded specimens in museums, but some conditions are, fortunately, of such exceptional rarity (for example, 8-19, the entire head of an elderly man ravaged by a basal cell carcinoma) that there is little chance of acquiring them prospectively. With fixed specimens, there is also the opportunity to perform meticulous dissections to demonstrate important features (for example, 1-85, a beautiful demonstration of varicose veins). A few illustrations just serve to satisfy our innate curiosity (for example, 4-79, bladder calculus formed around a tie-pin).

The main purpose of this atlas is to bring the contents of the Wellcome Museum to a wider audience. There is too much here for undergraduates and the emphasis is on conditions presenting as surgical problems. Surgeons and pathologists in training will find this book a useful resource.

JCE UNDERWOOD

Hematology of Infancy and Childhood. 2 volumes. 4th edn. Nathan and Oski. (Price: 184/\$250.) Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Ltd. 1992. ISBN 0 7216 3357 9.

"The gold standard..." screams the advertising leaflet for this 2 000 page, two volume, 5.5 kg multiauthor textbook, quoting from a review of the third edition. One immediately wonders if, as with posters outside theatres staging productions claimed to be "riveting" "an evening to remember" or "a joyous experience", some vital qualifier such as "not" or "hardly" might be missing.

The reader should be reassured. For size and effort alone the description would be appropriate, and the work is in reality a major reference source on haematology of human beings of all ages and not just children. There is much basic science, and extensive revision has been undertaken since the last edition five years ago. The editors must have a task akin to that of painting the Forth Bridge (that is, never ending), for the production time of a publication of this breadth and depth, marshalling some 90 expert contributors, must be a quinquennium at least.

Children's blood diseases tend to fall into two categories, extremely common and very rare. It is for the latter type that the contents particularly excel. To enter the literature (the North American literature, anyway) on any haematological topic, however obscure, this text is as good as a CD-ROM database. Although most sections are readable, the book is definitely for reference, not browsing. Its size and weight