

coming from outside the United States, and only one, Professor Bruce Ponder, from the United Kingdom. However, there is little cultural conspiracy and the text is readily accessible. Each section has a contribution from someone who is considered to be the field leader and all of the main institutions are reasonably well represented. The market offers two main competitors: "Cancer: Principles and Practice of Oncology", commonly known as "DeVita" (JP Lippincott), and "Treatment of Cancer" (Chapman and Hall). To some extent the decision as to which to choose is parochial and lies between the Memorial-Sloan-Kettering in New York, the Hammer-smith in London, and this volume that inclines towards Harvard in Boston.

"Cancer Medicine" is contemporary and definitive with respect to the essential cancer curriculum. It is helpfully arranged with clinical cancer medicine in mind. The historical context is presented extremely well and the book lends itself as a resource for undergraduate lecturing. It is comprehensive enough for postgraduates and basic scientists alike. The presentation is a little cheap for the price, and lacks a certain authoritative dignity, but this is deceptive. Weighing more than 7 kg this tome is 45% heavier than the field leaders. If surgeons were still using the family bible for ganglions, then this would be a match for any cancer.

R PENSON

**Cells Tissues and Disease.** Magno G, Joris I. (Pp 974; £60.00.) Blackwell Science. 1996. ISBN 0 8654 2372 5.

It is regrettable that many generations of medical students have almost traditionally regarded pathology as a rather dull subject to be endured rather than appreciated. This remarkable publication will, beyond question, dispel any such unfortunate perceptions. It is superbly presented and written in a colloquial and eminently readable style that attracts interest from the outset while encompassing a wealth of data. Lavishly illustrated, the text is further embellished by numerous tables and diagrams most of which are readily assimilable. Another notable feature is the emphasis on historical events, with acknowledgement of the diverse sources of the ideas on which our current concepts of disease are based; what also will be found stimulating is the imaginative use of what one might describe as the "obiter dictum".

The central theme of the book is a reaffirmation of Virchows original concept that all pathological processes are related to cellular changes, and that the cell can be regarded as the "elementary patient". The immense value of this cellular approach is particularly evident in the analysis of the inflammatory response, its consequences, and its inter-relationships with other cellular events. While a basic knowledge of immunology is presumed, the disorders of immunity are discussed with admirable clarity. The authors also take a refreshing new look at the phenomenon of cell death, and as one might

expect the many aspects of neoplasia are comprehensively explored.

The scholarship of this book is undeniable and its reference list is impressive. Only when the authors enter into the more detailed realms of systematic pathology is their touch marginally less sure footed (few pathologists for example now refer to pleomorphic salivary adenomas as mixed tumours). This however is a minor digression and for any jaded pathologist or unresponsive medical student this book will undoubtedly rekindle enthusiasm. It is highly recommended not only for all those who are entering medicine but also for those who want to take up pathology as a speciality, as well as for the many scientists and doctors who seek wider understanding of the diseases with which they have to deal on a day to day basis. It also helps to re-establish the sometimes forgotten truism that without a basic understanding of the pathological sciences there might be little to choose between conventional and alternative medicine.

F D LEE

#### **Gastrointestinal Mucosal Biopsy.**

Goldman H. (Pp 608, 509 halftones, 26 colour plates; US\$95.00.) Churchill Livingstone. 1996. ISBN 0 443 08990 6.

The idea of a single volume dealing with mucosal biopsy of the whole gastrointestinal tract has always appealed to me, and so it was with eager anticipation that I started to read this new book. Of course it would have to be pretty special to surpass or even equal the tried and tested "Biopsy Pathology" series, but I was willing to give it a try. Quite rapidly, however, eager anticipation was replaced by frustrated disappointment as I realised it fell well short of the mark.

The book is volume 20 in the American series "Contemporary Issues in Surgical Pathology". It deals with all sites in the gastrointestinal tract from oesophagus to anal canal in 570 medium-sized pages. Like most large textbooks of gastrointestinal pathology, a functional approach is adopted; individual disease entities are classified and described and their histological features listed. Unfortunately, this approach does not work in a text on mucosal biopsies. The histological descriptions are not nearly detailed enough—for example, the section on idiopathic inflammatory bowel disease is only 12 pages, and acute self-limited colitis is dealt with in a single paragraph. However, the major weakness is that differential diagnoses, which after all are what most of us need from such a textbook, are not even mentioned.

On the positive side, the many tables scattered throughout the book are useful and the numerous illustrations are of good size and quality. These features apart, I found little appealing about this book, even the layout of the text is rather unattractive and the cover bland, reflecting the content within. I'm sticking to the "Biopsy Pathology" series and suggest that others do the same.

P DOMIZIO

## Notices

### **The Leeds course in clinical nutrition**

2-5 September, 1997

Leeds, UK

For further information, please contact Ms Samantha Armitage, School of Continuing Education, Continuing Education Building, Springfield Mount, Leeds LS2 9NG. (Tel: 0113 233 3236; fax: 0113 233 3240.)

### **Technical developments in cancer research**

Tuesday 30 September, 1997

Genoa, Italy

The aim of the symposium is to bring together scientists and industrial partners interested in research and development of the new technologies based on DNA microchips.

For further information, please contact Fondazione Internazionale Menarini, Piazza del Carmine, 4, 20121 Milan, Italy. (Tel: +39 2 874932/866715; fax: +39 2 804739.)

### **Istituto Giannina Gaslini—International Agency for Research on Cancer course in cancer genetics**

25-30 September, 1997

Genoa, Italy

Supported by grants from the European Association for Cancer Research and the Swiss Cancer League, in collaboration with the IST, Genoa.

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