

# PostScript

## CORRESPONDENCE

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### Molten gold was poured down his throat until his bowels burst

We were intrigued by the paper of van de Groot *et al* describing the pathology of forced ingestion of molten metal<sup>1</sup>; however, we were concerned to note that at least one of the references was from a very dubious source. The statement that this method of execution was used by both the Romans and the Spanish Inquisition is supported by a single reference. This is an excerpt from JA Wylie's *History of Protestantism*,<sup>2</sup> a polemic published in 1878, and has been accessed via a website ([www.reformation.org](http://www.reformation.org)), which most scientists would regard as unorthodox, and some as offensive. The authors of the website maintain, inter alia, that the earth is 6000 years old, vaccination is a Catholic plot, and Edward Jenner and Charles Darwin were secret Jesuits. We doubt if such a website can be regarded as a reliable source of historical or scientific information.

This criticism of a not too serious paper may seem petty, but the point is an important one. The Internet has given the scientific community easy access to writings from an unimaginably wide variety of sources. Few of these sources have been "peer reviewed", and many are inaccurate, subjective, biased, or bigoted. Doctors and scientists need to be careful to choose reliable sources for their references, especially when working from the Internet. Reviewers of articles should also remember their responsibility to ensure accuracy in all aspects of the publication—it may not be feasible to check every reference, but at least internet based sources are relatively easy to scrutinise.

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#### References

- 1 Van de Groot FRW, ten Berge RL, Vos R. Historical Perspectives: Molten gold was poured down his throat until his bowels burst. *J Clin Pathol* 2003;56:157
- 2 JA Wylie. *History of Protestantism*, 1878 [electronic version accessed via [www.reformation.org](http://www.reformation.org)].

### Internet referencing

I read the Historical Perspectives contribution "Molten gold was poured down his throat until his bowels burst"<sup>1</sup> with mounting horror and incredulity. Although the subject matter was unusual and the animal model dubious, I was most puzzled by the nature of the references. The second and fourth references are to web pages. Investigation of these pages shows that both are postings taken from books at least one of which is in print in English translation in several editions.<sup>2,3</sup> The third reference appears to be a duplicate of the fourth and mistakenly attributes an anthology of literature to the individual who put together the web page rather than the compiler of the anthology. Although it may be convenient for readers to be able to find references on the Internet, web addresses can be very ephemeral and a true historical perspective should require quotation of the title and author of the original published work.

A Rubin

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#### References

- 1 Van de Goot FRE, ten Berge RL, Vos R. Historical Perspectives: Molten gold was poured down his throat until his bowels burst. *J Clin Pathol* 2003;56:157.
- 2 Wylie JA. *History of Protestantism*. London: Cassell and Company, 1878.
- 3 Mishnah Sanhedrin, Chapter 7 [English translation in *Mishnah Nezikin 2a*; 107-9, New York: Mesorah Publications, 1987].

## BOOK REVIEWS



### Morson and Dawson's Gastrointestinal Pathology

Day DW, Jass JR, Price AB, *et al*, eds. (£175.00.) Blackwell Publishing, 2003. ISBN 0 632042044.

Having read, summarised, and imbibed the 2nd edition of this book as a trainee and used the 3rd as a practising pathologist, I reviewed the 4th edition with great relish. The title remains as a tribute to the two doyennes of gastrointestinal pathology and the book is written by current British luminaries in this field. The basic format of previous editions is maintained, but supplemented by some new illustrations (often in colour) and additional sections (especially molecular aspects). The best way to review a book is to use it as a benchbook beside one's microscope. Everything I encountered in routine practice is well described and didactically stated in this book.

Some observations did strike me when looking at specific entities and referring residents to these specific areas. Although the book is stated to be published in 2003, there are no references (or very few, if I have missed them) from beyond 1999. This is not intended as a major criticism, but there have been some important papers published in gastrointestinal diseases in the past two to three years. One that readily comes to mind is the consensus paper on gastrointestinal stromal tumours and the criteria for the assessment of risk of recurrence, published in April 2002. Secondly, I am led to believe that the causative organism for most cases (if not all) of intestinal spirochaetosis is thought to be *Serpulina pilosicoli* rather than *Brachyspira aalborgi*.

Perhaps spoiled by the widespread use of colour in other modern textbooks I feel this book could have benefitted from the use of colour print for chapter titles, headings, and subheadings.

These minor observations aside, I thoroughly enjoyed going through this book. I found it authoritative, comprehensive, and a complete textbook of gastrointestinal pathology written in a lucid and unequivocal manner. It will, without doubt, be a standard textbook in every histopathology department, read by all trainees presenting to examinations and practising pathologists requiring information in a hands on fashion. I would recommend strongly that gastroenterologists read this book too.

R Chetty

### Ovarian Cancer

Jacobs IJ, Shepherd JH, Oram DH, *et al*, eds. (£125.00.) Oxford University Press, 2002. ISBN 0 19850826 3.

*Ovarian Cancer* is a combination of two separate but complementary initiatives. One initiative was a series of reviews commissioned to cover the spectrum of clinical management of ovarian cancer from prevention, screening, and diagnosis to surgery, chemotherapy, and palliative care. The second initiative has been coordinated by the Helene Harris Memorial Trust (HHMT), which organises key biennial meetings in ovarian cancer. Attendance at these meetings is by invitation to a small group of international authorities. Participants at the most recent HHMT meeting in Stockholm were asked to prepare a chapter based on their contribution. This mixture of review chapters and chapters detailing recent advances in clinical aspects and basic science research developments has created a unique book.

One of us (MS) is presently undertaking an MD investigating molecular aspects of ovarian cancer and found many chapters in the book immensely useful for background reading. The second of us (WGM), as a practising gynaecological pathologist, especially found the "non-pathological" chapters interesting. These are very useful for background reading before multidisciplinary gynaecological oncology meetings and before the teaching of pathology and gynaecological trainees. The book gives an in depth view of all aspects related to ovarian cancer, something of great importance with the ever increasing emphasis on multidisciplinary care and teamwork.

The book comprises eight parts ranging from the aetiology of ovarian cancer through to the natural history and pathology, tumour biology, prevention and screening, diagnostic techniques and prognostic factors, surgical treatment and organisation of care, adjuvant and palliative treatment, and novel treatments for the future. Within each of these parts there are multiple chapters, resulting in 55 chapters in total. This results in an extremely comprehensive review of a rapidly developing field.

Purely pathological chapters included are "The pathology of epithelial ovarian cancer", "The pathology of borderline ovarian malignancy", "Primary non-epithelial ovarian cancers", and "Metastases in the ovary". The pathology chapters, although of necessity brief, are concise and surprisingly detailed, and we especially enjoyed the chapter on "Pathology of borderline ovarian malignancy". On a slight downside, but something that does not detract from the overall quality of the book, all the histological photomicrographs are black and white, there are no gross photographs, and in the chapter on "Primary non-epithelial ovarian cancers" there are no photomicrographs. However, this is not meant to be a detailed pathology textbook and, as already stated, these factors do not detract from the overall quality of the book.

The authors state that this publication is aimed at clinicians and researchers in the field of ovarian cancer. As far as pathologists are concerned, most with a major interest in gynaecological pathology will find this book useful, especially for background reading. We feel that this book will also be of particular benefit to pathology trainees preparing for MRCPATH examinations and to those undertaking research into aspects of ovarian cancer. This book would be a useful addition to the library of any pathology laboratory.

**M Scott, W G McCluggage**

### Practical Urological Cytopathology

Bardales RH. (\$139.00.) Oxford University Press, 2002. ISBN 0 19 513495 8.

This book extensively covers the diagnostic and prognostic features of primary and secondary tumours of the urinary tract from the cytological point of view. The text combines recent and classic definitions, particularly in the classification of urothelial neoplasms. New advances in molecular biology, and the use of biomarkers and special techniques for the detection of urothelial cancer are detailed. Other featured topics include fine needle aspiration cytology of urinary tract neoplasms.

The book has three elements that will be very much appreciated by the readers. The first is the 300 colour photomicrographs that illustrate in detail each chapter. All the images are of very good quality. They enable even inexperienced people to obtain the proper information about the cytological features of the lesions being described. The second is the tables that accurately summarise the details of each chapter. The third is the "boxes" in

which the pieces of information included in the corresponding chapters are detailed in a comprehensive manner.

My personal evaluation is such that this is an excellent book for cytopathologists and histopathologists. In fact, the information contained in the book is undoubtedly more abundant and more accurate than that included in standard cytopathology textbooks. In addition, this book will be appreciated by urologists and oncologists. Both will find all they need to know about urological cytopathology from a very practical point of view. I suggest that this book should also be read by pathology residents so that they can obtain the necessary background on the cytological features of neoplastic and non-neoplastic lesions of the bladder.

**R Montironi**

### RT-PCR Protocols. Methods in Molecular Biology, Vol. 193

O'Connell J, ed. (\$99.50.) Humana Press, 2002. ISBN 0 89603 875 0.

Another addition to the Methods in Molecular Biology series and this one does exactly what it says on the cover. Although basically a recipe book, it has a useful introduction that succinctly describes a range of applications for the reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) and the major practical points of its undertaking. In addition, there are brief reviews of current methodologies for quantitative RT-PCR and also the detection and quantitation of hepatitis C virus RNA—clinically and commercially—one of the most important applications of RT-PCR. The rest of the volume, reasonably enough, is given over to specific protocols. There are sections covering RNA detection and various quantitation methods, and others concerning mRNA in situ localisation and its differential expression (of particular importance in the study of malignancy). If you have the talent and the inclination you may be interested in the applications of RT-PCR for genetic analysis, immunology, antisense technology, and cDNA cloning. Theoretically, all chapters provide more or less sufficient information for any reasonably skilful scientist to reproduce the results, although actually this is often down to personal flair. Diagrams are sometimes provided; many of them are comprehensible. Sadly, the section concerning the detection of RNA viruses is confined to hepatitis C, although I suppose the trick is to extrapolate the techniques to other viruses. Oddly, the section referring to in situ localisation includes a protocol for the detection of *Mycobacterium paratuberculosis* DNA with never a mention of RNA, much less RT-PCR. The obvious appeal of this volume is to nervous neophytes attempting RT-PCR for the first time, or more practised groups or individuals wishing to widen their horizons. In addition, the generally clear and concise introductions, to the book itself and to each protocol, provide useful explanations for those bewildered by the molecular biology techniques they may find mentioned in the literature.

**J Mitchell**

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Full details of events to be included should be sent to Maggie Butler, Technical Editor JCP, The Cedars, 36 Queen Street, Castle Hedingham, Essex CO9 3HA, UK; email: [maggie.butler2@btopenworld.com](mailto:maggie.butler2@btopenworld.com)

### Arteriosclerosis and Vascular Biology: An Update

17 May, 2003, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, Baltimore, Maryland, USA

Further details: Conference Coordinator, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, Office of Continuing Medical Education, Turner 20, 720 Rutland Avenue, Baltimore, Maryland 21205-2195, USA. (Tel: +1 (410) 955 2959; Fax: +1 (490) 955 0807; Email: [cmenet@jhmi.edu](mailto:cmenet@jhmi.edu); Website: <http://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/cme>)

### UK NEQAS for Blood Coagulation Annual Scientific Meeting

10–11 June 2003, Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield, UK

Further details: Timothy AL Woods, UK NEQAS for Blood Coagulation, Rutledge Mews, 3 Southbourne Road, Sheffield S10 2QN, UK. (Tel: +44 (0)114 267 3300; Fax: +44 (0)114 267 3309; Email: [talwoods@coageqa.demon.co.uk](mailto:talwoods@coageqa.demon.co.uk))

### Fourth International Symposium on Hormonal Carcinogenesis

21–25 June 2003, Palau de la Musica, Valencia, Spain

Further details: Tandria Price/Dr Jonathathan J Li, Department of Pharmacology, Toxicology and Therapeutics, Mail Stop 1018, University of Kansas Medical Center, 3901 Rainbow Blvd, Kansas City, KS 66160-7417, USA. (Tel: +1 913 588 4744; Fax: +1 913 588 4740; Email: [tpprice@kumc.edu](mailto:tpprice@kumc.edu); Website: <http://www.kumc.edu/hormonecancers>)

### UK NEQAS for Leucocyte Immunophenotyping Annual Scientific Meeting

24–25 June 2003, Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield, UK

Further details: June Pidd, UK NEQAS for Leucocyte Immunophenotyping, Rutledge Mews, 3 Southbourne Road, Sheffield S10 2QN, UK. (Tel: +44 (0)114 267 3600; Fax: +44 (0)114 267 3601; Email: [ukneqasli@btconnect.com](mailto:ukneqasli@btconnect.com))

### Practical Pulmonary Pathology

22–25 July, 2003, Brompton Hospital, London, UK

Further details: Professor B Corrin, Brompton Hospital, London SW3 6NP, UK. (Fax: +44 (0) 20 7 351 8293; Email: [b.corrin@ic.ac.uk](mailto:b.corrin@ic.ac.uk))

### ACP Management Course for Pathologists, 2003

10–12 September 2003, Hardwick Hall Hotel, Sedgefield, County Durham, UK

Further details: Ms Valerie Wood, ACP Central Office, 189 Dyke Road, Hove, East Sussex, BN3 1TL, UK. (Tel +44 01273 775700; Fax +44 01273 773303; Email: [valerie@pathologists.org.uk](mailto:valerie@pathologists.org.uk))