Management of Back Pain. By Richard W Porter. Pp. 177. £25.00. Churchill Livingstone: Edinburgh. 1986.

Mr Porter has produced a readable and instructive book, rightly emphasising management rather than treatment. It is unfortunate that in parts his anatomy varies from that of Gray and Russell Brain so that for the uninitiated it is then difficult to be sure of the validity of other points made in the text.

In areas where there is a substantial Asian population spinal tuberculosis is not as rare as implied. Mr Porter emphasises the overwhelming proportion of mechanical causes for back pain. This extends to both rheumatological and orthopaedic practice.

It is difficult to know at whom this book is aimed. There is too much surgical detail for most rheumatologists, who would know that gout as the cause of back pain can be ignored, while I wonder if the operative details are sufficient for a surgeon in training.

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Rheumatology. An Annual Review. Vol. 10. Connective Tissue: Biological and Clinical Aspects. Edited by K Kühn and T Krieg (series editor M Schattenkirschner). Pp. 471. £137.30. Karger: Basle. 1986.

The study of connective tissue metabolism, once a Cinderella subject guaranteed to produce groans from medical students and yawns even from practising rheumatologists, came into its own in the 1970s with the realisation of the many different types of collagen and the elucidation of some of their primary sequences and topographical properties. At the same time an understanding of the structure of the proteoglycans and their relationship both with one another and with the collagens in the matrix was achieved. Also in the last decade, the first genetic abnormalities of collagen were described, and it became clear that the same clinical symptoms, particularly in osteogenesis imperfecta, could arise from a variety of different genetic abnormalities in the molecule. Coincident with this mushrooming of knowledge about collagens and proteoglycans was the discovery of fibronectin, laminin, and other glycoproteins, which gave a new meaning to the concept of the basement membrane.

The current respectability of the study of connective tissue metabolism is established when Vol 10 of the series *Rheumatology. An Annual Review* is devoted entirely to the biological and clinical aspects of connective tissue. The editors of this volume are to be congratulated on producing a valuable and scholarly work which spans the subject in a comprehensive and readable manner. There are 17 chapters dealing with the morphological, molecular, and supramolecular structure of collagen as well as the mechanisms and control of its biosynthesis. The regulation of its degradation by enzymes in the synovia and inhibitors of these enzymes are dealt with in another chapter, as also are inborn areas of collagen metabolism. The chapter on radioimmunoassay for the study of connective tissue metabolism reminds me of how far we have come from the days when a certain edict of collagen biochemists was that collagen was not immunogenic! As well as looking at the collagen molecule and its function and dysfunction there are chapters which describe the proteoglycans of articular cartilage, their structure and biosynthesis, bone proteins and their mineralisation, and other non-collagenous glycoproteins. For the clinician there are chapters on wound healing, the pathogenesis of fibrosis, and others on the connective tissues in scleroderma and the extracellular matrix in malignancy. I hope this brief summary of the contents of the book will give an idea of the depth of the field it covers.

It would be unfair to pick out particular chapters either for criticism or praise, but it is noticeable that some are concise and short and others tend to be rather too discursive and, therefore, too long. Each chapter is, of course, by an expert or experts in their particular field and in general they review current literature to date and most of these reviews are both factual and critical.

The most serious adverse criticism of this book is for the publishers who have priced it at £137.00. This makes it prohibitively expensive for personal libraries and means that it may not be as widely read as it should be. I was not happy with the index, which is not sufficiently comprehensive and is not up to the generally high standard of the text.

Nevertheless, I think this is a very worthwhile volume and should be of interest to rheumatologists, biochemists, biophysicists, and biologists interested in connective tissue metabolism; it is likely to be a standard work for several years to come.

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