Book reviews

L'Actualité Rhumatologique 1995. S de Sèze, A Ryckewaert, M-F Kahn, *et al*, eds. (Pp 400; FFr450.) Paris: L'Expansion Scientifique Française, 1995. ISBN 2-7046-1471-7.

This publication has been composed from the proceedings of an annual postgraduate meeting for French rheumatologists that has been established for more than 30 years, is widely respected, and very popular. The popularity of this book will be limited in the UK, not necessarily because of its content, but because it is in French. I am not fully aware of the linguistic capabilities of the average British rheumatologist, but feel that he/she is unlikely to start a chapter entitled 'les lésions mal connues du bourrelet glénoïdien' with too much confidence of its content, though 'le traitement du syndrome de Raynaud' may be a lot more appealing. This is a shame, because there is much useful information to be gleaned from the book and it provides an insight into the differing approaches to rheumatology practised by our neighbours. As the chances of getting the British to embrace the French language are about as remote as the French abandoning their bouillabaisse for fish and chips, it would be nice to see a translation of this book, either in full or in part.

L'Actualité Rhumatologique 1995 is not a comprehensive rheumatology textbook, but provides the reader with a series of detailed reviews of a number of wide ranging topics. The book is not traditionally formatted and the sections are rather loosely titled and of varying length. The longest section is entitled 'Pathologie ostéo-articulaire, neurologique and vertébrale' and includes chapters dealing with topics as diverse as spontaneous spinal haemorrhage, renal dialysis shoulder, and articular infections in HIV. The shortest section deals with methods of investigation and includes only one chapter—an excellent review of circumscribed myositis ossificans, of course. There are other sections covering chapters on surgery, therapeutics, metabolic bone disease, and inflammatory arthropathies. Some of the chapters are quite specific; two that I particularly enjoyed were entitled 'Why is acute gout self-limiting?' and 'Does treatment of fibromyalgia work?' Incidentally, 'SPID' (syndrome polyalgique idiopathique diffus) is the authors' preferred name for fibromyalgia, and has a rather pleasant onomatopoeic feel to it.

The French accord much detail to the history and evolution of disease, and I enjoyed the recurring references to original pioneers and authors. Overall, I found the reviews to be detailed, informative and useful—a nice pot pourri of current concepts. If you have a good grasp of French, then these proceedings are worth a look (medical and technical French is so much easier than conversational French). Otherwise, we'll have to wait for the publishers to produce a translation. Incidentally, if you are a French speaker, I would recommend a visit to the annual congress of the French Society of Rheumatology that takes place in Paris every autumn. The discussions and ideas raised can be quite illuminating and provocative, and I have always enjoyed tremendous hospitality.

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Practical rheumatology. J H Klippel, P A Dieppe, eds. (Pp 422; £39.95.) London: Times Mirror International Publishers, 1995. ISBN 0-7234-2429-2.

Rheumatological problems account for approximately 20% of primary care consultations. *Practical rheumatology* is a collection of chapters taken from the larger textbook *Rheumatology*, also edited by J H Klippel and P A Dieppe, that was published in 1994. It was written with the aim of helping 'internists, primary care and general physicians' to acquire a 'good working knowledge of the common rheumatic diseases and their management'. Accordingly, the book opens with a clear summary of the signs and symptoms of musculoskeletal disease, followed by helpful chapters on regional pain problems: neck, back, shoulder, wrist, hand, and knee. These chapters concentrate on the non-inflammatory/soft tissue causes of joint pain, with clear pictures of the examination of the relevant joint—an aspect often not covered in sufficient detail by other textbooks. As back pain is a major rheumatological cause of morbidity in the community, it was useful to have a detailed chapter on its causes and examination of patients with back pain, with emphasis on the worrying symptoms and signs. Treatment for this disabling condition is discussed fully, highlighting the importance of physical measures. Another chapter goes through techniques of joint aspiration and injection, though practical teaching on patients must still be the ideal learning situation. The remainder of the book is then taken up with rheumatological disorders. The emphasis is on rheumatoid arthritis and the various connective tissue diseases, though osteoarthritis, crystal diseases, and reactive arthritis are well covered in nine chapters. The references are up to date until 1992.

The book is comprehensive in its breadth of coverage of the rheumatological conditions and the good quality colour pictures and tables complement understanding of the text. The major omission is a lack of mention of metabolic bone disease; as the population ages, osteoporosis and osteoporotic fractures will become an increasing problem. As prevention is better than treatment in osteoporosis, it behoves the doctor to be aware of the problem, especially as patients are immobile, taking corticosteroids, or both, because of their arthritis. Minor criticisms include the lack of a diagram of the fibromyalgic tender areas to aid the diagnosis of fibromyalgia, and a small degree of unavoidable overlap between the narrative and practical problem chapters, when certain conditions are discussed in both chapters, in differing amount of detail.

Despite these shortcomings, overall this is a book worth acquiring, as it will be a useful reference for any practitioner wishing to improve their initial diagnosis and management of a variety of rheumatic conditions.

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