

Book reviews

Clinics in Rheumatic Diseases. Vol. 1/No. 2. Current Management of Rheumatoid Arthritis. Guest Editors: Carl M. Pearson and W. Carson Dick. August, 1975. Pp. 482; illustrated, tabs. Saunders, London, Philadelphia, and Toronto (£5.00)

The stated aim of this issue is to excite further interest in rheumatic diseases. The editors have assembled contributions from France, America, Britain, and Australia which blend well together (despite the American propensity for the split infinitive).

Discussion of antirheumatic drug therapy takes up a major part of the book. The 're-thinking of old principles', to which the editors refer in their foreword, presumably applies particularly to the chapter on salicylates by Champion, Day, Graham, and Paull, and that on ACTH and corticosteroids by Jasani. The metabolism and effects of salicylates are outlined and the pros and cons of various salicylates are discussed. Whether it is necessary to advocate acetylsalicylic acid over sodium salicylate nowadays is debatable. Disturbance of transaminase levels is not mentioned. This chapter is a reminder of how in a few years prescribing habits have moved from the policies of intensive, near-toxic salicylate regimens to the present state of drug therapy when the greater acceptability to the patients of modern drugs can lead to rather sloppy prescribing habits by the doctor. Jasani takes a historical prospective on ACTH and corticosteroids in an attempt to show how our approach to these drugs has evolved. This is the longest chapter in the book and certainly revives discussion of ACTH that is not often found in recent texts. In fact, a case is made out for preferring ACTH to oral glucocorticoids.

Famaey's contribution covers the mode of action of recently introduced nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs of which there are now a considerable number. Reference is made in fact to preparations which have been withdrawn from use or were never actually marketed in this country or the USA because of the lack of efficacy or a high incidence of side effects. Lee writes a succinct summary of the clinical applications of those available. Those old soldiers, phenylbutazone and indomethacin have a chapter to themselves by Fowler. The chapters on gold therapy by Gerber and Paulus and that on penicillamine by Mowat and Huskisson are useful summaries of current practice.

In discussion of the surgical treatment of rheumatoid arthritis there can be difficulty over the relative emphasis on the surgical techniques involved or on selection of patients, timing of surgery, and the overall combined approach of the surgeon-physician team. Perhaps the former is favoured rather than the latter in the chapters on surgery of the hand and of the hip, although this is very much a matter for individual preference. Cracchiolo's article on the surgery of the knee and foot is a useful, well-balanced article.

There are excellent chapters on the detection of change in disease activity by Levy and Dick, on juvenile polyarthritis by Ansell, and on immunosuppressive drugs by Pearson and Levy.

A short chapter by Hart covers the general management of patients with rheumatoid arthritis. A volume of this type cannot be comprehensive and must tend to favour hard data over speculation. However, in a forward-looking text, as this aims to be, it might have been useful to touch on psychological, sexual, and social problems of the arthritic, and perhaps on methods of delivery of health care to these patients, especially in view of the current medicopolitical debates going on all over the world.

This is a hard-backed volume which is on the whole well produced, although there are some misprints. Consideration might be given by the publishers to the production of a cheaper, less durable edition, since there will be presumably an intention to revise the volumes as medical practice evolves and a wider readership might thereby be gained.

M. L. SNAITH

Equipment for the Disabled—Communication. 4th Edition. September 1975. Pp. 58. Published by Oxford Regional Health Authority. Available from Equipment for the Disabled, 2 Foredown Drive, Portslade, Sussex BN4 2BB (£1.50)

Every Occupational Therapy Department should possess the extensive series 'Equipment for the Disabled'. Clinicians dealing with patients suffering from chronic disability would also benefit from them. The patient with severe rheumatoid arthritis may be helped more by our knowledge of aids to defecation than our erudition in serum immunoglobulin levels—the nitty-gritty of management, you might say. Certainly I have found the four loose-leaf volumes, 'Equipment for the Disabled', an invaluable source of reference over the years. The series is constantly being updated.

The present bound volume on 'Communication' is one of a number of special titles. The others are: Wheelchairs and Outdoor Transport, Clothing and Dressing for Adults, Home Management, Disabled Mothers, Personal Care, Leisure and Gardening, Housing and Furniture, Hoists and Walking Aids, Disabled Child.

This edition of 'Communication' maintains the excellent standard of the series. It presents information to those professionally concerned in advising and selecting equipment for handicapped persons. The contents are comprehensive. They range over speech, call bells, alarm systems, remote control apparatus, telephones, radio and television, spectacles, books, page turners, tables, typewriters, teaching, and the needs of the blind and deaf. Each piece of equipment is succinctly



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Ann Rheum Dis 1976 35: 473
doi: 10.1136/ard.35.5.473-a

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