Book reviews

The HLA System. Vol. 34, No. 3. *British Medical Bulletin*. British Council: London. 1978

This issue of the *British Medical Bulletin*, edited by Professor Bodmer, provides a broad view of current knowledge in this field. The emphasis is on the possible clinical applications, but many of the sections will be hard going for most physicians. For the expert the report of the 7th International Histocompatibility Workshop and Conference will provide more comprehensive reading covering the same ground in more detail.

The sections on HLA and various diseases are informative, and each section provides a summary of the known linkages in particular conditions. Those thinking of searching for disease associations would do well to take note of the comments in the introductory review by Dr Heather Dick pointing out the problems in designing studies on HLA linkage to disease. The lack of clinical value in requesting tissue typing in sporadic 'interesting' cases is surely clear to anyone reading this section.

The paper on HLA ankylosing spondylitis and rheumatoid arthritis is important to all rheumatologists. The association of HLA B27 with ankylosing spondylitis is by now common parlance, but the weaker association with HLA A2 is of interest, suggesting there are 2 possible susceptibility genes, one near the HLA B and another close to the HLA A. The strong linkage disequilibrium with HLA B27 also influences the incidence, form, and severity of the disease, but the precise effect in the closely associated rheumatic disorders is still open to speculation, in particular the interplay between the environmental factors and the genetic markers.

The association of DW4 and DRW4 and HLA B15 with rheumatoid arthritis is now established but weak. Nevertheless it may be important in relation to disease severity.

This issue is sound and will keep readers informed in this field, but it should be apparent that we are in the middle—or some would say at the beginning—of an exciting and evolving subject in which considerable discoveries have yet to be made.

G. D. PEGRUM

Metabolic Bone Disease and Related Research. Vol. 1. No. 1. (Ed.) R. S. Goldsmith, P. J. Meunier, R. Baron, and D. B. P. Goodman. Pp. 79. 4 issues a year \$100. SNPM: Paris. 1978

It is fitting that the first journal to be devoted to metabolic bone disease should be dedicated to the memory of Philippe Bordier, for he was one of the first to utilise quantitative bone histology in the investigation of metabolic bone disease and was an enthusiastic proponent of the need for a journal in this field. The first issue contains articles by many of his colleagues on a variety of subjects, including 2 of his special interests—senile

osteoporosis and the effects of vitamin D metabolites on bone histology in renal osseodystrophy.

The intention of the journal is to publish articles on aspects of bone histology and on calcitonin, parathyroid hormone, and vitamin D, especially when the articles bridge the gap between experimental studies and the management of clinical problems. In fulfilling this aim the journal will be of interest to gastroenterologists, rheumatologists, endocrinologists, nephrologists, and geriatricians as well as to those concerned with disorders of calcium metabolism. It is, however, rather expensive at \$100 per annum for 4–6 issues. Nevertheless I expect it to become the definitive journal in its field.

J. B. EASTWOOD

Le Diagnostic en Rhumatologie. (Ed.) S. de Sèze and A. Ryckewaert. Pp. 400. F. Masson: Paris. 1978.

This new volume, in the French language, produced by the rheumatologists and physicians of the Hospitals of Paris, sets out to consider the methods by which an accurate rheumatological diagnosis can be made. As is stated in the preface, it does not aim to be a comprehensive textbook of rheumatology or of osteoarticular pathology. Thus by taking a symptom, or series of symptoms, as the starting point the diagnosis and differential diagnosis are discussed.

This inevitably leads to a great deal of repetition, which the authors admit. A study of the contents reveals the difficulties encountered by the editors in trying to make each chapter comprehensive and self-contained at the expense of repetition. Thus in the first section one finds chapters on 'diagnosis of chronic polyarthritis in adults', 'diagnosis of acute polyarthritis in adults', 'diagnosis of acute monoarthritis in adults', and 'diagnosis of subacute and chronic monoarthritis'. The second section deals with individual joints, chapters each being devoted to the diagnosis of arthropathies of the (eg) shoulder, elbow, hand, knee, etc. This too involves considerable repetition both between chapters and between the first and second sections of the book. No fewer than 10 chapters are devoted to the diagnosis of 'painful syndromes of the spine and nerve roots' ranging from a diagnosis of cervical pain to sciatica, and a further 10 chapters to the diagnosis of bone diseases.

The authors state that this volume is not only for the rheumatologist but also for the non-specialist. While one may inevitably find individual points of criticism within chapters, one is left wondering how this book is intended to be used. Each chapter individually is comprehensive. Is it therefore intended to be a reference volume to be consulted in the event of a patient presenting with a specific problem, for example a monarticular arthropathy? It is doubtful whether this is a volume to be read through as one would wish with a standard textbook. The