Book reviews

Textbook of Rheumatology. Ed William N Kelley *et al.* (Pp 1942; £172.00). Philadelphia, PA: W B Saunders 1993. ISBN 0 7216 3157 6.

It is a considerable task to read two large volumes from beginning to end. Ideally, reference texts should be completely up to date, and written by an expert intimately involved in the field who can direct the reader to the pertinent facts and the most relevant source material. A huge editorial undertaking such as Kelley means that by the time the finished article is available, few of the references are truly up to date. Indeed, in rapidly evolving fields such as the basic sciences that underpin our discipline, the rate of change in knowledge is rapid and this tends to limit the value of any large textbook.

The experts that have been chosen to contribute are hardly international, and the ease with which they communicate their subject to a more generalist audience is variable. For example, chapter 3 on matrix glycoproteins and proteoglycans is a difficult subject to distil for a wide audience, but this is not helped by the unwieldy list of references that accompany many statements, suggesting that the authors are well read but not particularly discerning. There are areas of unnecessary overlap, such as, the section on cytokines in chapter 7 on T and B cells, and then the excellent and authoritative chapter devoted to the subject (chapter 13).

The new edition of Kelley includes new chapters on immunogenetics and rheumatic disease, cell adhesion molecules, fibroblast function and fibrosis, laboratory evaluation of inflammation, sulphasalazine, the eosinophilia-myalgia syndrome, rheumatological manifestations of human immunodeficiency virus infection, and specific immunodeficiency diseases. Many chapters have been extensively updated from the last edition to reflect advances, such as, imaging techniques and surgical developments. Generally, these contributions are excellent and very readable.

There is, however, increasing competition in the process of "keeping up-to-date". There are the international rheumatology journals with regular review articles, and journals such as (*Current Opinion in Rheumatology*) which can, by their nature, be much more responsive to recent trends in rheumatology research and developments.

These days it is essential to be able to perform computer literature searches. These facilities mean that the researcher is less likely to refer to an authoritative textbook. Furthermore, such computer data bases have also created an expectation of increasing "user-friendliness". Readers expect summaries, conclusions, tables instead of text, and diagrams, pictures and cartoons wherever possible. Kelley is undoubtedly improving on these aspects, though there is still room for improvement. It should be possible to give authors a template to follow so

that, for example, the epidemiology of a disease is titled and appears at the same point in each chapter. Many of the disease chapters are in no particular order, and the summaries and conclusions are of variable quality.

Recent developments in information technology, the rapid advances in some aspects of rheumatology and the fact that there are only so many hours in a day, mean that the textbook is increasingly less attractive as a reference. A review of these other options for authoritative information is necessary before one can justify £172 for two volumes.

Rheumatology Unit,
City Hospital, Hucknell Road,
Nottingham NG5 1PB, United Kingdom

CHRIS DEIGHTON

The Wrist in Rheumatoid Arthritis. Eds B R Simmen and F W Hagen. (Pp 220; £105.70). Basel: S Karger AG, 1992. ISBN 3 8055 55148.

Dedicated to Norbert Gschwend, the book contains papers on the rheumatoid wrist which were presented at the 5th meeting of the European Rheumatoid Arthritis Surgical Society. Most of the papers are from European centres.

The sections include: the natural history, conservative surgery, arthrodesis and arthroplasty of the rheumatoid wrist, and as the book is essentially the proceedings of a conference, the standard of the contributions is variable. There is also considerable repetition, such as, the six chapters on wrist synovectomy which all report similar results. Several techniques of wrist arthrodesis, are reported some of which appeared rather excessive.

I was particularly interested in the chapters on radiolunate arthrodesis, the extensor pollicis brevis to extensor pollicis longus tendon transfer and wrist arthroplasty. The results reported for metal on plastic total wrist replacements are interesting as they are better than is generally perceived in the United Kingdom, and may be superior to the silastic arthroplasty. The chapters on the natural history of rheumatoid wrist arthritis are also worth reading and demonstrate how frequently this joint is involved. They also describe the different patterns of rheumatoid wrist involvement.

Department of Orthopaedic and Accident Surgery
University Hospital,
Queen's Medical Centre,
Nottingham NG7 2UH,
United Kingdom

TIM DAVIS