BOOK REVIEWS


In the words of the editor, this is the first book to endeavour to assess the place of these hormones in clinical practice. It is a matter of opinion whether the time is ripe for such an assessment, but Dr. Copeman and his colleagues have performed a very useful task in condensing the vast literature on the subject into manageable form, and adding their personal experiences in the use of ACTH and cortisone in a wide variety of diseases. There are chapters devoted to rheumatic and collagen diseases, diseases of the eye, endocrine disorders, respiratory and allergic diseases, skin diseases, and diseases of the haemopoietic system. Dr. Copeman and Dr. O. Savage open the section on rheumatic and collagen diseases with an excellent review of the chemical nature and physiological effects of these hormones, and give clear indications as to their value and limitations in treating this group of conditions. They feel that ACTH and cortisone will always play a practical part in treating cases of rheumatoid arthritis where the disease cannot be checked by other methods, and that with increased experience the hazards of long-term administration can be controlled.

In the section on diseases of the eye, Dr. M. Savory and Prof. Arnold Sorsby sound a note of caution. They feel that the use of cortisone in all uncontrolled infections of the eye is fraught with danger and that the indications and contraindications to its use are as yet not clear.

Dr. Dudley Hart describes the excellent results obtained in diseases of the pituitary and adrenal gland, where cortisone has now an established place in treatment.

In the section on skin diseases, some encouraging results are described, particularly in pemphigus where the hormones may be life-saving. Considerable space is devoted to acute disseminated lupus erythematosis, scleroderma, periarteritis nodosa, and dermatomyositis, all of which are also dealt with, although briefly, in the section on collagen diseases. This overlapping might be avoided in a future edition.

Dr. J. W. Stewart indicates the blood diseases in which the use of these hormones are justified in the light of experience gained to date.

Although others may not be so optimistic as to the ultimate value of ACTH and cortisone in the treatment of diseases of unknown aetiology on a long-term basis, and much still remains to be learnt about their use and mode of action, the authors are to be congratulated on this careful summary of the knowledge and experience gained up to the present time.

J. J. R. Duthie.


This treatise by one of the leading urologists in Scandinavia is a valuable contribution to our knowledge of the aetiological significance of the genito-urinary system in ankylosing spondylitis, and is based on a study of the disease in a group of 117 male patients with an exhaustive review of the literature of the last half century, dealing with the nature of the disease. Many new observations are recorded, especially on the part played by genito-urinary infections, and a critical examination is given of current theories and past observations. Stress is laid on the importance of the early signs and peripheral symptoms which are well described, and the differential diagnosis from rheumatic fever and rheumatoid arthritis is clearly indicated. Iritis appears to be an early sign; it occurred in 33 of the 117 cases closely studied by the author, and in several instances was the symptom which led to investigation of the pelvic area where evidence of sacro-iliac disease was revealed by radiography. These early signs, arthritis and tenosynovitis especially, are fully discussed and their differential diagnosis indicated. The importance of thorough pelvic examination, especially by X-rays, for evidence of sacro-iliac disease, and searching investigation of the urinary region, prostate, seminal vesicles, and Cowper's glands by history, physical examination, radiology, histology, and chemical and bacterial examination of the secretions, is well described. The relation of gonorrheal infection is very fully dealt with, as is also the non-specific infections of the prostato-vesicular region, including Reiter's syndrome.

An interesting section deals with the intervertebral disks; these have in the past been regarded as normal with maintained height, but more thorough radiological scrutiny has recently shown that this is not always the case, for degenerative changes have been demonstrated in the disks and irregular areas of bone density in the vertebral bodies. Another important section is devoted to the pathology of affections of the joints of the clavicle and sternum, particularly of the acromio-clavicular joints. A statement made in the discussion is to be noted: In all these sites there is first decalcification and destruction, and later, as a healing phase, proliferation, calcification, and ossification.

There are many other important and useful passages to which attention might be drawn, but this would seem...