BOOK REVIEWS


The fourth edition of this well-known book has been brought up to date. There is a new chapter on the systemic rheumatic diseases and many sections have been revised. As the author states, this is a book for final-year students and General Practitioners. The difficulty in compressing the many aetiological theories from stress to auto-immunity has been overcome in a masterly manner. In a small book the opinions must inevitably be didactic, but a good balance has been obtained between the various treatments and sound advice is given on their suitability for different types of case.

The chapter on osteo-arthritis is particularly clear and the short descriptions of the pseudo-rheumatic diseases, in a chapter to themselves, are comprehensive and concise.

This book can be thoroughly recommended.

Oswald Savage.


The data from 509 autopsies of cases with rheumatic heart disease, carried out between 1936 and 1950, has been subjected to statistical analysis. The particular aspects studied include age, sex, race, cause of death, and frequency of valve involvement, together with various inter-relationships of these and other factors. One point of interest as regards age, is that 40 per cent. of the 160 cases in the last 5 years of the survey were over 60 years old at the time of death. Taking all the cases, 44 per cent. (223) were male and 90 per cent. were white.

Rheumatic heart disease was considered to be the cause of death in 63·3 per cent., and this was due to rheumatic activity (9 per cent.), heart failure (24 per cent.), emboli (15 per cent.), and subacute bacterial endocarditis (15·3 per cent.). In the remainder, it was thought to be coincidental. The details are set out in 56 tables of varying complexity and interest. No attempt at correlation with any clinical data has been made. One chapter contains some very useful information on the purely anatomical condition of the valves.

The extensive review of the literature claimed on the front cover consists of 88 references, 83 of which are American and five British.

Barbara Ansell.

Beiträge zur Rheumatologie.


Prof. H. Tichy, who has edited both these volumes, has contributed a chapter on the classification and nomenclature of the rheumatic diseases to volume V. Since this volume deals with serology, he has tried to classify these diseases on that basis, dividing them into antistreptolysin and agglutination types. Thus rheumatic fever would belong to the former and rheumatoid arthritis to the latter. Crude though such a classification must necessarily be in the present state of our knowledge, it may, nevertheless, be a portent of the shape of things to come. Much attention has been devoted to the Streptococcus-L-Agglutination test (L = lebend, or living) first described by Nicholls and Stainsby (1931). As this test was carried out in over 4,000 cases simultaneously with the antistreptolysin reaction and a modified sensitized sheep-cell agglutination test, it was possible to draw some interesting conclusions. Briefly, it was found that the Streptococcus-L-Agglutination titres vary directly with the amount of liver damage present and in parallel with the results of the Thymol turbidity test. Positive titres develop but slowly in rheumatoid arthritis and indicate a poorer prognosis. In ankylosing spondylitis the serology is mixed and lends support to the long held British view that the disease is not “rheumatoid spondylitis”.

Vol. VI is given a paediatric slant by a major contribution from two Bulgarian workers on the clinical and laboratory aspects of rheumatic fever. Their experience of the disease appears to be considerable and, except for minor variations such as the stress on focal sepsis, seems similar to that of workers in other countries. It is only when they write of “morbus Sokolski-Bouillard” that the reader realizes he has been peeping behind the so-called Iron Curtain.

The volumes have adequate indices and a wealth of international references, and should prove of interest to the specialist.

David Preiskel.

GAIRDNER AWARDS

The major award announced by the Gairdner Foundation for the year 1961 has been won by Dr. Francis H. C. Crick of the Laboratory of Molecular Biology, Cambridge, England. Other prizes went to Dr. Albert H. Coons, Harvard Medical School, Boston, Mass.; Dr. Clarence Crafoord, Karolinska Institute, Stockholm, Sweden; Dr. Henry G. Kunkel, Rockefeller Institute, New York City; and Dr. Stanley J. Sarnoff, National Institute of Health, Bethesda, Maryland.