Book reviews

Modern Trends in Rheumatology—2. Edited by ALAN G. S. HILL. 1971. Pp. 376 112 figs. Butterworths, London. (£6).

This book maintains the high standard of the previous volume in this series and should be read, cover to cover, by every specialist in the field. It consists of twenty largely unconnected review papers dealing with a diversity of subjects of current interest, and most of them are very well presented and readable. The only obvious omission is a detailed discussion of the current state of immunology in relation to the connective tissue diseases, in which it continues to hold such a central place. It is true that various facets of this problem were discussed in the first book, but a good deal has happened since then, particularly with regard to cell-mediated immunity.

Two excellent papers are those on 'Corticosteroid-induced suppression of the cerebro-hypothalamo-pituitary-adrenal axis' by G. Nuki and W. Wilson Downie and 'Immuno-suppressive drugs in rheumatoid arthritis' by H. L. F. Currey. Both are succinct but very comprehensive and will be standard reference articles on these subjects for some time. As might be anticipated, the bioengineering group from Leeds is well represented with three chapters. Some of the work will by now be familiar to many readers of the book, but the subject is an important one and it is no doubt good for us to remind ourselves about Coulomb resistance, Newtonian fluid, and the rest. We are spared an excess of mathematical equations and the theoretical considerations underlying the application of joint prostheses are of great interest. Elsewhere in the book are three useful chapters on the clinical aspects of surgery in arthritis.

Of localized interest are a down-to-earth chapter on 'The Rheumatoid Foot' by A. St. J. Dixon and one on 'Rheumatoid Arthritis of the Cervical Spine' by J. Ball and J. Sharp. The last two authors appear to be less insistent than formerly on surgery being undertaken in all patients with rheumatoid subluxation attended by neurological complications, a view with which many will agree as experience with this problem accumulates. In chapters of wider application, J. A. Boyle and J. E. Seegmiller review selected aspects of purine metabolism and J. J. R. Duthie discusses 'Infection in the Aetiology of Rheumatoid Arthritis'. Both these, of course, are rapidly-changing subjects and already, by the time of writing, one wishes Professor Duthie had given us more than six lines on the question of mycoplasma infection. Incidentally, the late D. V. Davies and A. J. Palfrey, in their discussion of normal and rheumatoid synovial membrane, come to the percipient conclusion that ultramicroscopic evidence does not support the idea of an

infective element, of either viral or bacterial type, in the causation of rheumatoid arthritis.

Dr. Sanford Meyerowitz was invited to grasp the prickly nettle of 'The Continuing Investigation of Psycho-social Variables in Rheumatoid Arthritis' and does not entirely get away with it. Of the three psychological hypotheses he discusses, there is very little to be said for psychological traits being associated with either disease specificity or disease onset; but we do know a little more about the disease course hypothesis—that identifiable psychological responses in patients with rheumatoid arthritis influence the course of the illness—than Dr. Meyerowitz implies. As he himself complains, there is a polarization of belief and interest here.

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Physiopathologie des maladies des os et des articulations (Physiopathology of Diseases of Bones and Joints). By A. RYCKEWAERT. 1970. Pp. 1016, 309 figs. Baillière et Fils, Paris. (Frs 206).

This is a book which could well, with a few reservations, be translated into English, and a beneficent National Health Service might then consider giving a copy to all rheumatologists. There is no word in English which quite translates the term 'Physiopathology'—what it means in practice is a textbook of both the rare and the common diseases which turn up in a rheumatology clinic together with illustrative histology, morbid anatomy, and x rays, but not forgetting the treatment of individual conditions where this ties in with the disease process. The result is a very useful Encyclopaedia of Rheumatology in just over a thousand pages, very well referenced although mainly to French and American authors. It is curious how both for French and English rheumatologists the Channel is a greater gap than the Atlantic. The illustrations are excellent, and are drawn in the main from the collection of Professor de Sèze. One of the chapters I would have rewritten for an English language edition would be that on the anatomy and physiology of the connective tissue. This is very much the received opinion with the cells and other constituents described morphologically though this is much less meaningful than the new knowledge about their function and their ability to differentiate. Similarly, concerning polymyalgia rheumatica, the author repeats the statement that it last from 1 to 4 years, even though Bagratuni has shown that it may go on for at least 14 years before steroids and it certainly continues to show such durations