Book reviews

Total Management of the Arthritic Patient. Edited by GEORGE E. EHRLICH. 1973. Pp. 265, 16 tables, 152 figs. Lippincott, Philadelphia; Blackwell Scientific Publications, Oxford (£10)

The training of physicians tends to emphasize the need to respond appropriately when confronted with a particular clinical situation. Such 'crisis' orientation is not as relevant when one is discussing the management of chronic arthritis. This book sets out a comprehensive guide to planning a long-term management programme.

The subject matter falls into two parts. The first is a highly successful attempt to enunciate a philosophy of long-term management. This is contained in the Introduction and in the introductory part of each chapter. Multiple authorship inevitably leads to some repetition, but the principles are clearly and eloquently spelled out. I would particularly recommend 'Psycho-Social Problems in Management', in which is explored the doctor-patient relationship, and the final chapter, 'Trying to be Scientific in One's Approach to Management' (by Philip Wood and Trevor Benn of Manchester). The latter contains a lucid statement of the ethical situation as it concerns the doctor involved in chronic diseases, and goes on to set out most concisely the principles of assessing and extending the body of knowledge we have.

The rest of the volume deals with specific aspects of management. Some of the sections are excellent, or at least contain information not readily available in one volume elsewhere. The sexual problems of arthritics are fully discussed, and an interesting essay on the structure of Rheumatology as a specialty is included. Rehabilitation is rather illogically divided into two parts (by different authors), but contains excellent material on functional evaluation.

The more specific the subject matter becomes, the more the concept of an 'arthritic patient' becomes an albatross about the author's neck. The chapters on conservative management are wise, though incomplete (nursing and physiotherapy are barely mentioned). Surgical management, the only section with which I was disappointed, unfortunately forms one fifth of the book. The presentation is wholly didactic, and although the author refers to 'our series' (p. 69), no references are given. As the surgeon is an enthusiast for synovectomy and does not mention arthrodesis of the knee, one feels his opinions would seem to require at least passing justification from the literature.

Who then should read this book? It is undoubtedly written for physicians and makes a good introduction to the subject. I think general practitioners will find it too long. I would recommend it to doctors just entering the specialty of Rheumatology or physicians taking up the care of the chronically ill.

A. C. BOYLE

Atlas of Hand Radiographs. By PHILIP JACOBS. 1973. Pp. 248, 300 figs. Harvey, Miller, and Medcalf, London (£7.00).

Dr Philip Jacobs has collected together what is probably a unique collection of radiographs of the hand. He has been helped in this by many friends and colleagues foremost among whom is Dr E. H. 'Eddie' Allen to whom he has dedicated the book. The radiographs have been grouped together on an aetiological basis, and cover congenital abnormalities, chromosomal disorders, dysplasias, infections, haemoglobinopathies, metabolic disorders, neoplasms, and the arthropathies. The text is kept to a minimum and each illustration is accompanied by a short descriptive paragraph pointing out the main radiological abnormalities and describing some of the associated clinical features.

When a radiograph of the hand is used as an illustration in a book it is often difficult to reproduce the carpal bones adequately and at the same time ensure that the terminal phalanges can be seen. In most instances in this Atlas this excessive range of contrast has been coped with very well, which speaks highly for the quality of the original radiographs and the care with which these have been reproduced. Most of the reproductions are the same size as the original, and the rest only a little smaller.

This Atlas is primarily intended for the use of radiologists and clinicians interested in the disease of bones and joints. As an Atlas it is undoubtedly completely successful and will certainly be widely used both as a work of reference and as a training manual. Rheumatologists, who will be familiar with all the facets of the more common arthropathies, will find it of particular value when faced with a rare or bizarre hand radiograph.

However, the reviewer could not help wishing to know a little bit more about the patients and their clinical state. A knowledge of the age and sex of the patient, as well as the results of some biochemical or other relevant tests would allow the hand radiograph to be seen more as a problem in every day practice than a picture in a textbook. In some of the less common conditions it would also be helpful to have some pathological correlation alongside the radiograph, or a reference to some paper where additional information can be obtained. Enlarging the text and bringing in other data would change the nature of the book slightly and make it rather more than an Atlas, but, at the same time, I think it might well enhance its value. Perhaps the author might consider some alterations on these lines in future editions.

I have no doubt whatsoever that this book will be widely accepted and will take its place among the standard reference books in medical libraries and Departments of Radiology.

J. W. LAWS