Book reviews


This is now a very substantial multi-author book, and the list of contributors reads like a 'Who's Who' of British rheumatology. The pathological and immunological background to this group of diseases is extensively discussed, but it is the emphasis on clinical aspects that will make this an essential reference book for the practising rheumatologist.

The section on rheumatoid arthritis is introduced by a fascinating and very up-to-date section on the role of microbial infection in rheumatic disease and by an excellent section on pathology. The more clinical chapters include a full, critical account of joint replacement and other surgical aspects that will be welcomed by the practising physician, and, among the many aspects that are discussed, those on drug treatment, juvenile chronic arthritis, ankylosing spondylitis, and Reiter's syndrome deserve special mention. There are outstandingly good discussions on metabolic disorders (including gout), on amyloidosis, and on the less common connective tissue disorders. When it comes to the account of systemic lupus erythematosus, not all would accept the diagnostic accuracy here claimed for the DNA binding test, or that daily doses of 200 mg prednisolone have any place in treatment, even in severe cases. These, however, are minor criticisms of a useful section.

The book is handsomely produced, with good illustrations and excellent reproduction of radiographs. (An upside-down cervical spine on p. 321 provides evidence, however, that nobody is perfect.) The price alone produces a slightly jarring note, as a reminder that we still live in a world of rising costs.

M. H. LESSOF


This volume reports the 44 papers given in February 1976 at the International Workshop on Vascular Lesions of Collagen Diseases and Related Conditions held in Tokyo under the sponsorship of the Japan Medical Research Foundation (JMRF). The papers, arranged in 9 sections, are of absorbing interest to European readers for two main reasons. First, they give much contemporary information on the steep rise both in life expectation and, pari passu, of the growing problem of the rheumatic diseases in Japan during the past 20 years. And second, they provide some insight into the viewpoints of Japanese workers regarding the nature and pathogenesis of these disorders. For reasons that are not understood, there is a selectively high frequency in Japan of those disturbances of the connective tissue system that are mediated by the blood vessels; and it is no surprise therefore to find that the JMRF have concentrated on Takayasu's arteritis, Buerger's disease, Behçet's disease, sarcoid, Kawasaki disease (mucocutaneous lymph node syndrome), and on selected animal models of vasculitis.

Since five overseas speakers acted as invited chairmen to parts of the workshop, and since these foreign speakers included two widely known for their scholarship and forthrightness (Ziff and Bywaters), not the least interesting parts of the volume are those discussions where contemporary Japanese views are called in question by Western critics, to the mutual advantage of both parties and of the reader. The two large sections defining the criteria by which the Japanese now identify 'malignant rheumatoid arthritis' (MRA) exemplify the value of this account for European rheumatologists. Under the auspices of the Japan Ministry of Health and Welfare, a study group was organised to investigate MRA. The clinical criteria correspond quite closely to those applied in this country to the severe, systemic form of RA in which a relatively mild arthritis may be overshadowed by the manifestations of systemic disease. In one survey (Shiokawa) in which 'direct examination of patients was not a part', questionnaires brought to light in Tokyo 5019 cases of RA among whom were 628 of MRA. Constructed on this basis are geographical charts of MRA for Japan, frequency distribution curves, and laboratory analyses. In one pathological study (Koyokuro) 25 cases of 'definite RA' were collected from medical institutions and hospitals all over Japan. The pathological conclusions led to a classification of systemic manifestations and of vasculitis in RA that is closely similar to that recognized by Western investigators for many years.

Where there remains an inexplicably high Japanese incidence of disease (Takayasu, Kawasaki) that is disproportionate by our standards, there is surely a racial or environmental clue to the origins of these disorders which we would be wise to recognise. Where the Japanese have simply reclassified universal phenomena such as severe systemic RA, the published views, which are of considerable importance, serve more to emphasise differences in East-West philosophy than to elucidate the disorders.

For those who can afford to buy, or who can borrow, this well-printed text, there is much of value, that can be rapidly assimilated. By uniting Eastern and Western thought, its publication can only benefit those who search for truth in the complex undergrowth of rheumatological forestry.

D. L. GARDNER


Graham Hughes has become an established authority on the inflammatory disorders of connective tissue, especially systemic lupus erythematosus, based on his extensive investigative and clinical studies in this country, the USA, and the West Indies. The emphasis in this book lies in clinical diagnosis, with a number of exemplary case reports and generous clinical, histological, and radiographic illustrations, although there is adequate discussion on aetiological factors, immunological, viral, and genetic. The layout is conventional, with chapters devoted to various individual entities which constitute our present concept of these disorders-SLE, rheumatoid arthritis, polyarteritis, and so on—including one on 'mixed connective tissue disease' which...
the author accepts as a syndrome with high titre of antibodies to ribonucleoprotein and a favourable prognosis. The final chapter deals with immune complex disease and the complement system, followed by an appendix covering immunological tests in the rheumatic diseases. The book is well written, clearly set out, very readable, and covers a large field with commendable brevity.

In conclusion, this is a very readable book which brings together the different aspects of the subject, which are often not found together in one volume. The emphasis is on manipulation and other practical methods of management.

W. Y. LOEBL


This monograph brings a refreshingly practical approach to the management of spinal pain. The author’s considerable experience and his insight into the complexities of the problem in individual patients are set out in a clear and entertaining way. Such statements, as that there is no scientific proof that exercises are of value, or that tension headaches may be due to ‘the wrong pillow or the wrong bedfellow’, will be readily echoed by the reader.

The aetiology of spinal pain and the basic anatomical and neurophysiological aspects of the back are outlined first. Lack of references makes it impossible to ascertain the basis for some of the less conventional theories expressed. The apparent lack of a critical review of the text by an expert colleague is more obvious when a single author deals with a vast and nebulous subject such as backache. Some imprecision of syntax and typographical errors have not been eliminated. Under metabolic bone disease, osteomalacia is not mentioned. Perhaps this condition is rarer in New Zealand than it is in Britain. The description of spinal movements is somewhat simplistic, disregarding published data on linked movements.

The author is at his best in the description of manipulation, exercises, and other methods of management, including prevention. Techniques are well illustrated and described and there is a welcome avoidance of dogmatism. Dr Fisk emphasises that the method must be learned on the living—not from books, and he rightly states that manipulation can only be offered as a trial of treatment. Perhaps he does not stress sufficiently the hazards of unexpected aggravation which can result from this method of treatment.


This is one of the series of booklets from Mary Marlborough Lodge at Oxford. It gives a most useful guide to outdoor wheelchairs and other mobility aids for children and adults, including electrically powered wheelchairs. It gives full dimensions and other details of items available and names of manufacturers, but does not attempt to advise in which circumstances different pieces of equipment should be used, nor does it set out to compare their relative merits. It would help if telephone numbers could be given for the various organisations and commercial firms listed in this booklet. Simple practical advice on ramps, both home made and commercially available, are illustrated and enough comparative data and information given to enable a choice to be made from among the commercial ramps illustrated.

There is a photograph of each item and a note against those which may be supplied under the National Health Service, although insufficient prominence is given to the fact that none of the patient-operated outdoor electric wheelchairs is available under the Health Service. Particularly, as these will often be privately purchased, more comparative information of advantages and disadvantages of each type would be valuable. Van conversions for a disabled wheelchair passenger are considered, including fixing the wheelchair in the van.

There is a detailed section on seating modifications and sound advice on what to consider and where to go for adaptations to a car for a disabled driver. The booklet says that intended alterations may have to be checked with the Department of the Environment but unfortunately does not state to which part of this government department one should make application. The basic essential data of dimensions for a garage suitable for a disabled driver are clearly given, an aspect which usually receives little attention; this includes illustrations of different types of remote controlled garage doors.

Altogether it is a most useful addition to the series from Mary Marlborough Lodge; both this and the other booklets on equipment for the disabled are essential to have in every rehabilitation department.

C. J. GOODWILL


Owing no doubt to the influence of international conferences, the spread of medical literature, and personal exchanges, French concepts of the rheumatic diseases, as set out in this book, seem to be very similar to those in this country. Apart perhaps from a greater preoccupation with metabolic bone disease as such, the French rheumatologist sees the same sort of conditions as his British colleague. Treatment is much the same in the two countries, although one suspects that the French have an even wider choice than we have of, say, anti-inflammatory agents for use in rheumatoid arthritis, and four active radioisotopes are listed for local use (‘synoviorthèse’). Recommended management of gout is similar, the French again having at their disposal additional hypouricaemic agents such as thiopurinol and benzbromaron: a natural gastrointestinal proctility permits a brief discussion upon the merits of mineral waters containing sulphates, calcium, magnesium (Vittel, Contrexeville), trace metals (Evian), and bicarbonate (Vichy). This is an excellent ‘abridgement’ of rheumatology for French-speaking undergraduate and postgraduate students.

J. T. SCOTT


In 1973, Hounsfield first described the system of computerised axial tomography (CAT) which subsequently revolutionised radiological technology in allowing non-invasive investigation of the internal organs without the blurring associated with the conventional tomography. There have been dramatic technological advances since then with ever improving reduction in picture element size, so improving the quality of the images