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.

J. T. SCOTT

A Practical Guide to the Management of the Painful Neck and Back. Diagnosis, Manipulation, Exercises, Prevention. By James W. Fisk. (Pp. xiii+209; illustrated + tables. US \$15.75.) Thomas: Springfield, Illinois. 1977.

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.

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

Abbrégé de Rhumatologie. 2nd edition. By L. Simon, F. Blotman, and J. Claustre. (Pp. 569; illustrated + tables. 62 Fr., paperback.) Masson: Paris. 1977.

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 benzbromarone: a natural gastro-nomic proclivity 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

Equipment for the Disabled. Outdoor Transport. Edited by P. J. R. Nichols and E. R. Wilshire. (Pp. 43; illustrated. £1.50.) Oxford Regional Health Authority: Oxford. 1977.

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. GOODYOLL

Computerised Axial Tomography. By J. Gambarelli, G. Guérinel, L. Chevrot, and M. Mattèi. (Pp. 286; illustrated. US \$105.60.) Springer: Berlin, Heidelberg, and New York. 1977.

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

obtained. Indeed, the most recent apparatus produces pictures significantly better than those illustrated in this atlas which is just published.

In this volume the theoretical background to CAT scans is described initially in general terms and subsequently with the full physical and mathematical analyses which are beyond the abilities of the reviewer to comprehend. There follows an atlas of sections taken through the entire skull and trunk and selected portions of the limbs. Each is presented together with a conventional slab radiograph of the same level, a line diagram to demonstrate the plane of section and sometimes a colour photograph of the same section. The atlas suffers from the drawback that only one picture is shown for each section and the 'window' or range of radio densities is arbitrarily chosen to illustrate particular points. In practice it is possible to vary this window so as to select the densities of organs of particular interest. For example, in the illustrations of the thorax and abdomen, the authors were obviously interested in the viscera, whereas the reviewer found the details of the vertebrae somewhat disappointing. However, it is possible to see the shape of the spinal canal and some details of the apophyseal joints so that it should be possible to use this technique as a tool to investigate spinal disease. There are some nice pictures showing the position of the odontoid peg in far greater detail than is possible by conventional radiology.

In the limbs there are transverse sections across the elbow, wrist, knee, and ankle. The normal joints are clearly seen but it remains to be determined whether this technique is useful for diagnosis and assessment in arthritis. It does seem likely that this method could be particularly helpful for assessing synovial cysts.

The scope of CAT scanning for studying various organs is considerably enhanced

by use of radiological contrast media. In the spine they allow delineation of the spinal cord and nerve roots. It is disappointing that there are no illustrations of the use of these media in this atlas. Moreover the authors have defied the international policy on computerised tomography, in which it has been accepted that sections would be shown as viewed from below, by illustrating them viewed from above.

This volume provides enough information to interest the reviewer into considering the possible applications of CAT scanning to rheumatology but insufficient to justify its purchase.

M. I. V. JAYSON

A Dictionary of Medical Ethics and Practice. By William A. R. Thomson. (Pp. 264. £10.00.) Wright: Bristol. 1977. **Dictionary of Medical Ethics.** Edited by A. S. Duncan, G. R. Dunstan, and R. B. Welbourn. (Pp. 336. £4.90, paperback.) Darton, Longman and Todd: London. 1977.

Medical ethics is rapidly becoming a respectable subject both for the profession and the general public. The old view that ethics is the sole prerogative of professors of moral philosophy in ancient universities is no longer so commonly held. Perhaps, indeed, the pendulum is swinging too far; it seems to be generally hoped that the right answers will come from discussion and debate between as many different people as possible.

The time is therefore ripe for the appearance of dictionaries of medical ethics to give definitions and concise articles on the bewildering number of questions that now face us all. Neither volume is a 'dictionary' in the narrow sense of the word, but rather a synopsis, and neither confines itself to purely ethical issues, as the title of Dr Thomson's

book makes clear. They both cover a wide range of topics from community health councils to contraception and from terminal care to transcendental meditation.

Although the two books cover similar ground, they are different in a number of ways. The first is by a single author, the former editor of the *Practitioner*; the second is edited by three distinguished professors—and has 116 contributors. One has a unified basis for its ethical opinion and declares it; the other has a variety of bases and has intentionally avoided 'biased views', or is careful to give alternatives. A wealth of information is clearly presented, particularly on the legal side, and selected references for further reading after each article add to the value of the books.

Both can be strongly recommended and make very interesting reading. For the person looking for a description of the present situation in medical ethics, Professor Duncan and colleagues will be most helpful; but for the reader wanting the 'rights and wrongs' of ethics and the answer to the question 'What ought I to do?' Dr Thomson's book is more satisfying. The challenge of both dictionaries, in their different ways, is that we have asked questions, raised issues, and discussed examples for long enough. Although we must start with definitions of terms and problems, we must now decide what is to be the basis for our ethical decisions in Britain for the second half of the 20th century. The answer will not come from the highest common denominator of as many different opinions as possible. Is man merely a highly intelligent animal? To whom are we ultimately accountable for our ethical decisions? It is to the answers to such questions that Dr Thomson, more clearly than the three professors, points the way.

A. G. JOHNSON