Book reviews


This issue of the British Medical Bulletin, edited by Professor Bodmer, provides a broad view of current knowledge in this field. The emphasis is on the possible clinical applications, but many of the sections will be hard going for most physicians. For the expert the report of the 7th International Histocompatibility Workshop and Conference will provide more comprehensive reading covering the same ground in more detail.

The sections on HLA and various diseases are informative, and each section provides a summary of the known linkages in particular conditions. Those thinking of searching for disease associations would do well to take note of the comments in the introductory review by Dr. Heather Dick pointing out the problems in designing studies on HLA linkage to disease. The lack of clinical value in requesting tissue typing in sporadic 'interesting' cases is surely clear to anyone reading this section.

The paper on HLA ankylosing spondylitis and rheumatoid arthritis is important to all rheumatologists. The association of HLA B27 with ankylosing spondylitis is now common parlance, but the weaker association with HLA A2 is of interest, suggesting there are 2 possible susceptibility genes, one near the HLA B and another close to the HLA A. The strong linkage disequilibrium with HLA B27 also influences the incidence, form, and severity of the disease, but the precise effect in the closely associated rheumatic disorders is still open to speculation, in particular the interplay between the environmental factors and the genetic markers.

The association of DW4 and DRW4 and HLA B15 with rheumatoid arthritis is now established but weak. Nevertheless it may be important in relation to disease severity.

This issue is sound and will keep readers informed in this field, but it should be apparent that we are in the middle—or some would say at the beginning—of an exciting and evolving subject in which considerable discoveries have yet to be made.

G. D. PEGRUM


It is fitting that the first journal to be devoted to metabolic bone disease should be dedicated to the memory of Philippe Bordier, for he was one of the first to utilise quantitative bone histology in the investigation of metabolic bone disease and was an enthusiastic proponent of the need for a journal in this field. The first issue contains articles by many of his colleagues on a variety of subjects, including 2 of his special interests—senile osteoporosis and the effects of vitamin D metabolites on bone histology in renal osteodystrophy.

The intention of the journal is to publish articles on aspects of bone histology and on calcitonin, parathyroid hormone, and vitamin D, especially when the articles bridge the gap between experimental studies and the management of clinical problems. In fulfilling this aim the journal will be of interest to gastroenterologists, rheumatologists, endocrinologists, nephrologists, and geriatrarians as well as to those concerned with disorders of calcium metabolism. It is, however, rather expensive at $100 per annum for 4-6 issues. Nevertheless I expect it to become the definitive journal in its field.

J. B. EASTWOOD


This new volume, in the French language, produced by the rheumatologists and physicians of the Hospitals of Paris, sets out to consider the methods by which an accurate rheumatological diagnosis can be made. As is stated in the preface, it does not aim to be a comprehensive textbook of rheumatology or of osteoarticular pathology. Thus by taking a symptom, or series of symptoms, as the starting point the diagnosis and differential diagnosis are discussed.

This inevitably leads to a great deal of repetition, which the authors admit. A study of the contents reveals the difficulties encountered by the editors in trying to make each chapter comprehensive and self-contained at the expense of repetition. Thus in the first section one finds chapters on 'diagnosis of chronic polyarthritis in adults', 'diagnosis of acute polyarthritis in adults', 'diagnosis of acute monarthritis in adults', and 'diagnosis of subacute and chronic monarthritis'. The second section deals with individual joints, chapters each being devoted to the diagnosis of arthropathies of the (eg) shoulder, elbow, hand, knee, etc. This too involves considerable repetition both between chapters and between the first and second sections of the book. No fewer than 10 chapters are devoted to the diagnosis of 'painful syndromes of the spine and nerve roots' ranging from a diagnosis of cervical pain to sciatica, and a further 10 chapters to the diagnosis of bone diseases.

The authors state that this volume is not only for the rheumatologist but also for the non-specialist. While one may inevitably find individual points of criticism within chapters, one is left wondering how this book is intended to be used. Each chapter individually is comprehensive. Is it therefore intended to be a reference volume to be consulted in the event of a patient presenting with a specific problem, for example a monarticular arthropathy? It is doubtful whether this is a volume to be read through as one would wish with a standard textbook. The
most startling omission is that there is not a chapter on arthritis in children, though there is passing reference to 'Still's disease' in one or two chapters. A bibliography is given at the end of the book but without references being quoted in the text, and it therefore is presumably intended as a guide to further reading. Such a bibliography is necessarily short and consists mainly of textbooks and review articles.

The use of this book, therefore, should be considered by those seeking to learn of the diagnostic approach to a specific rheumatological problem rather than as a comprehensive textbook.

C. G. BARNES


Here is everything we need to know about the shoulder and neck, starting with evolution and embryology of the region and finishing up with disability assessment and 'Guidelines to Testifying'—instructions about being an expert witness in court. The transatlantic flavour imparted by the attention given to the latter topic is also found in the chapter on athletic injuries, where of course baseball and softball are discussed to the exclusion of cricket. With golf and swimming we are on common ground, also, unfortunately, in the chapters on automobile and industrial injuries.

Dr J. C. Bateman has written his book from his standpoint as an eminent orthopaedic surgeon. He has 25 years of special interest in the shoulder joint, having, for example, performed over 1000 operations to repair a torn rotator cuff. In the light of this massive experience the diagnosis and management of localised anatomical lesions are admirably discussed, and I look forward to using the book as a reference work. On more medical, metabolic, and systemic disorders his touch is less sure, and there are a number of errors ('calcium thyrophosphate dehydrate,' etc.). The inclusion of conditions like scleroderma and systemic lupus erythematosus (without, incidentally, mentioning osteonecrosis, an occasional feature of SLE—and what is periartric 'fibrosis in the spine'?) in a book devoted to the shoulder and neck seems a little bizarre, but emphasises the enthusiastic and comprehensive way in which the author has approached his task.

J. T. SCOTT


If rheumatoid disease were confined to the joints perhaps rheumatology would never have emerged as a specialty, such is the interest in the extra-articular manifestations of this disease. Perhaps it is for this reason that I read this edition of Clinics in Rheumatic Diseases with some disappointment. The high standards of this series of publications are continued and the subjects are usually covered thoroughly, if in a somewhat pedestrian manner, in the form of a review of the literature (of which there is already too much: some of it should be buried, not reviewed). Doubtless the time schedule for Clinics in Rheumatic Diseases needs to be more exact than other multiauthor books. This, together with the distance apart of the editors and the well known difficulty in persuading authors to write about what they are asked to in sufficient time to enable the editors to provide some criticism and cohesion, doubtless put a particular burden on Drs Bluestone and Bacon.

The word 'clinical' implies looking after patients, but relatively little attention is given to treatment. It is certainly easier to be precise about the happenings in a test-tube than about the effects of a drug upon a sufferer. For this reason the views of experienced rheumatologists on treatment would have been of great value, even if unsupported by unsaasible evidence. Little is said about common conditions such as carpal tunnel compression or the neurological complications of cervical spine disease.

There is now so much to be read that publishers, editors, and authors alike should pay more attention to making their efforts interesting and readable. For instance, the sentence 'granulomas have been associated with uncomplicated pericarditis, with cardiac tamponade, and constrictive pericarditis' is clear if not profound. When broken up in three places by 9 references it becomes soporific. The succinct, if not always melodious, American colloquialisms might enliven medical articles. Alas, I suppose the same turgid style is used on both sides of the Atlantic. These remarks are not designed to discourage you from reading the book. It is full of information.

A. B. MYLES


Although for many years it has been recognised that rheumatoid arthritis is primarily a disease of soft tissues, the attention of most radiologists and others has been mainly focused on the changes which occur in bones. However, for over 10 years W. J. Weston has been concentrating his attention on the radiological appearances of the soft tissue changes in the rheumatic diseases, and has published many of his findings either in the British Journal of Radiology or the Journal of Australasian Radiology. These papers form the basis of this book.

After a short introduction, describing some of the technical factors involved in obtaining good radiographs, there is a description of the kind of changes which may be looked for in the soft tissues and their pathological significance. The appearances of lymphatic oedema, rheumatoid nodules, enlarged lymph nodes and joint effusions are described. The book is then divided into chapters based on individual joints. First the normal anatomy is described and then the soft tissue changes which may be seen in and around the joint in rheumatoid arthritis and other soft tissue disorders. The technique and value of arthrography and injection into synovial sheaths is discussed when appropriate.