

An Atlas of Radiology of Rheumatic Disorders. By J. Dequeker. Pp. 176 £12.00. Wolfe Medical Publications: London. 1982.

The atlas has been compiled by an eminent Belgian rheumatologist and is attractively laid out. There are 2 or 3 radiographs on each left-hand page with matching line diagrams and a brief description on the right-hand page. The text has a certain gallic charm, many of the patients being described by occupation such as postman, headmistress, nun, etc, and is a translation as is shown by the legend under Fig. 7, which reports that the patient had suffered from 'repeated attacks of hydrops of the knees'. The atlas is divided into 4 sections—the hand and elbow, the vertebral column, the hip and shoulder and the knee and foot. Most of the illustrations deal with joint diseases, but there are a few examples of bone infections, bone tumours and metabolic diseases of bone.

The preface states that 'the correct interpretation of a bone x-ray does not depend so much on the quality of the x-ray picture as on a knowledge of the patient's clinical data' and it seems possible that this comment is intended to excuse some very inferior radiographic reproductions. This may be acceptable in rare conditions where good radiographs can be difficult to obtain but is unacceptable in common conditions such as sclerotic metastases from carcinoma of the prostate, which are almost invisible on the lateral film of the lumbar spine (Fig. 52) and the grossly underpenetrated film of the pelvis (Fig. 98), which is described as Paget's disease.

The field covered by most of the radiographs is far too large for the abnormalities they are intended to demonstrate. This is particularly marked in Fig. 54, where a film of

the abdomen is used to illustrate sacroiliitis, and in Fig. 66, where the facial bones and skull base have been included although the abnormality is confined to the apophyseal joints between the second and third cervical vertebrae. This is a serious criticism, and most of the illustrations would be improved if the field size was reduced by about half. Had this been done when the book was being prepared, it might have been possible to adjust the tone of each film, so that the radiological abnormalities shown on the line diagrams would have been clearly visible on the printed radiograph.

The text sometimes seems too brief. There are 6 examples of osteoporosis which are variously described as idiopathic, primary axial, cortisone induced, postmenopausal, and generalised, but the criteria for these distinctions are not mentioned. The text which accompanies the example of spina bifida occulta (Fig. 80) does not describe the soft tissue abnormalities which are frequently associated with this condition and does not indicate that early diagnosis is desirable, as surgery can often arrest the progress of the neurological deficit.

There are some curious omissions in an atlas devoted to the radiology of rheumatic disorders. For instance, there are no examples of the oblique or 'ball catcher' view of the hands, which can show small erosions not shown on the conventional anteroposterior view, and there are not oblique films of the sacroiliac joints.

Despite these criticisms I enjoyed reading the atlas, which has been well printed on good thick paper. The idea is excellent and the layout clear, but the poor quality of the radiographs makes it difficult to recommend purchase by a library or individual.

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