Book review

Rheumatoid Arthritis: Surgery of the Complex Hand and Foot. Edited by F W Hagena. £80.50. Pp. 187. Karger: Basel. 1987.

Compilations of lectures given at a meeting rarely make for a pleasing read. The spoken word does not readily convert to paper and the disparity of styles makes a book disjointed. This book is taken from the 3rd Congress of the European Rheumatoid Arthritis Surgical Society in 1985. All the authors are experts in their field; many are from Europe. This makes the book particularly interesting as continental views on treatment are often slightly different from those in the United Kingdom.

The book is in two halves; the first dozen chapters being concerned with severe hand deformities. The opening two chapters are by Mannnerfelt, serving as an introduction to the management of a crippled hand. We have all been faced with this problem: where do we begin? Sound advice and much experience are crammed into five pages. It is well worth the read. 'Start with a winner' is a triumph of common sense. Swanson's chapter is as expected comprehensive and full of the techniques he has mastered, but can we all achieve his results? It stands out from the other chapters because of the impression that patients are referred to him early and procedures can therefore be planned as the disease progresses. This is what we all hope for, but how often do we see Hagena's 'forgotten rheumatoid hands' where function cannot be restituted? The remaining chapters concern the results of various surgical procedures.

The second half of the book was rather disappointing. This may indeed be a reflection of the status of foot

surgery, which has not really had the attention it has deserved over the years. It is clear that there is no easy answer to the management of the rheumatoid hind foot. Papers are presented extolling the virtues of subtalar arthrodesis, triple arthrodesis, ankle arthrodesis, and ankle arthroplasty. It is difficult to extract enough information from these chapters to be able to manage the individual case. Many of the techniques described are not well known in the English literature and it would have been of value if more details of the procedures had been given. Synovectomy is still practised widely on the continent and here we have a further account of the procedure in the forefoot. We all know that good results can be obtained, but does this treatment give better results than medical treatment in the long term? Sadly the answer is not found in this book. Various ways of performing a forefoot arthroplasty are championed by their proponents, but it is difficult to come to any conclusion as to which technique is the best.

This is a book, not to read from cover to cover, but to dip into occasionally. There are the occasional pearls to be found in its pages, but the surgeon wishing to learn what exactly to do with these difficult problems will probably remain as confused as ever. The rheumatologist will have difficulty finding out what his surgical colleagues are up to and, in particular, will not receive much guidance on the timing of referral for a surgical opinion. It is a book for the experienced rheumatoid surgeon who will be able to distinguish the chaff from the wheat. He will find it interesting reading.

Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon,
The London Hospital

W J GRANGE

Notes

VIIIth Eular Workshop for Rheumatology Research

The workshop will be held in Corfu, Greece during 18–20 March 1988. Main topics will relate to rheumatology and molecular biology: autoantigens, autoantibodies, and immunopeptides (interleukins—thymic humoral factors). Abstracts to be submitted by 15 January 1988 to Prof H M Moutsopoulos, Department of Medicine, School of Medicine, University of Ioannina, 453 32 Ioannina, Greece.

DNA/ENA antibody meeting: Methods of detection and clinical relevance

This international meeting will be held on 26 February

1988 at the Middlesex Hospital Medical School, London. Further details from Drs David Isenberg/Peter Maddison, c/o Bloomsbury Rheumatology Department, The Middlesex Hospital, Arthur Stanley House, Tottenham Street, London W1P 9PG.

XIV International Berzelius Symposium

This symposium on the topic 'Rheumatoid arthritis—challenge to modern medicine' will be held in Lund on 10–11 October 1988. Topics will include epidemiology, pathogenesis, disease monitoring, treatment. Details from Dr F Wollheim, The Swedish Society of Medicine, PO Box 558, S-101 27 Stockholm, Sweden.