Book reviews

A Synopsis of Rheumatic Diseases. Douglas N Golding. (Pp 315; £25.) Guildford, Surrey: Butterworth, 1989. ISBN 0-7236-08504.

This synopsis of rheumatic diseases is now in competition with several other short texts on rheumatology, many of which it preceded in the first edition. The author's well known enthusiasm for the subject is best illustrated by the case reports, which are new to this edition.

The 'synopsis' is directed towards the postgraduate doctor and would be useful for study before written examinations, or perhaps to keep for reference in the ward office. As the book comprises lists and shorthand notes it is not recommended for light reading.

The quality of the clinical photographs is excellent, but some of the line diagrams are not so good. The scope of physiotherapy is covered in some detail, as are other practical aspects of patient management. At the end of the book there is a section of multiple choice questions in rheumatology which come from MRCP examinations.

There are unfortunately many errors—for example, dyschondroplasia appears in the middle of a section on gout. The error is compounded by mislabelled and misplaced photographs and should not have passed the galley proofs. This type of mistake is not unique. Furthermore, the word metal appears instead of material in another section, which is totally misleading. Spelling mistakes such as 'keratin' sulphate instead of 'keratan' occur more than occasionally, which does the text no credit. I hope that the next edition will update the 1959 American Rheumatism Association (ARA) criteria for rheumatoid arthritis, which are printed 'en bloc' and have been revised since then. Likewise, the ARA criteria for other diseases, such as systemic lupus erythematosus, Reiter's disease, and systemic sclerosis, would fit well into this type of book, but have yet to appear.

It is only right and proper that rheumatology is represented in the series of books published as synopses. Those who are seeking condensed knowledge, in a hurry, should not be disappointed.

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Mainstream Medicine—Rheumatology. P Hollingworth. (Pp 212; £10.95.) London: Heinemann, 1988. ISBN 0-433-15120-X.

Recent years have seen the publication of a number of new short paperback textbooks on rheumatology. As with this one, the intention has been to satisfy the needs of the MRCP candidate and senior medical student. This is a useful addition to what is becoming a crowded market.

The book is set out along conventional lines with chapters devoted to various topics, such as rheumatoid arthritis, osteoarthritis, and so on. The introductory chapters on general topics like inflammation and immunology are very good and set the scene well for later contributions. The writing is succinct and a great deal of factual information has been condensed into a short textbook without making it 'stodgy'. Invariably, a search for obsolete information in any new textbook will succeed, and this is no exception. Oral gold is described as being in the experimental stage.

The orientation towards examination candidates is obvious in that there is excellent coverage of inflammatory rheumatic disease, but there is much less space devoted to the topics which occupy most of the average rheumatologist's time. This is fair enough for exam purposes but means that it will not provide much practical guidance in dealing with 'mundane' problems such as back pain. I imagine the next edition will also show an expansion of the section on osteoporosis, as this attracts very little comment in this book, considering the interest now being shown in the condition by rheumatologists.

A paperback of this size does not permit the inclusion of a large number of illustrations or tables, but I thought that the text would have been enhanced by more of these. Nevertheless, despite these comments, I found this a very readable, informative book, crammed with useful facts, and I would recommend it warmly, especially to examination candidates.

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Arthroscopy of the Knee. V Chassaing, J Parier. (Pp 142; £35.) London: Martin Dunitz, 1988. ISBN 0-948269-23-5.

A must for the beginner and the established practitioner of arthroscopy of the knee, this book of 142 pages is at the same time comprehensive and concise and should be regarded as a 'workshop manual' of arthroscopy. Reginald Elson, consultant orthopaedic surgeon in Sheffield, has translated the text of Vincent Chassaing and Jacques Parier from French into very readable English to provide a clear and well documented text on arthroscopy.

There is full description of the technique of arthroscopy of the knee, together with discussion of potential problems. Comprehensive detailing of the various instruments and ancillary equipment available for the budding arthroscopist is also given, and although the book is mainly aimed at the orthopaedic practice of arthroscopy, any rheumatologist would find it useful.

There is plenty of text, line drawings, and colour illustrations of normal findings inside the knee joint, which is always useful, acting as a bench mark for understanding the changes seen in disease. The colour pictures are of good, clear quality. The line drawings are adequate and, again, clear.

The overall philosophy of the book is a mature look at arthroscopy by two experienced arthroscopists, and although they are enthusiastic on the subject of arthroscopy, they none the less put arthroscopy into its right perspective with other techniques and clinical examination of the knee.

There is a small chapter devoted to some of the changes seen in rheumatological disease, though the scope of this chapter is relatively small and there are a number of omissions—presumably reflecting the orthopaedic bias of the text. Two useful additions are discussion chapters on the pitfalls and failures of the examination, and also a section on patient information about the procedure.

This is a very useful book on arthroscopy, to be recommended to the orthopaedic surgeon or rheumatologist who is considering starting arthroscopy or has become an expert in the field.

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