Notes and news

Vth Mediterranean congress of rheumatology

This symposium will be held at Madrid from 15 to 17 October 1990.

Main topics will be crystal related arthropathies, joint infections, surgical treatment of joint diseases, immunopathology, and bone metabolism. A session is devoted to free papers.

Details from the Secretariat: Professor J Gijon-Banos, Creacion Medicus, SA Serrano 26, 28001 Madrid, Spain. Teles 48230 ACCI. Fax 5640577.

European conference on systemic lupus erythematosus

This is the final announcement and call for abstracts for the European conference on systemic lupus erythematosus, which will be held at the RAI Congress Center, Amsterdarn, The Netherlands on 15 to 17 November 1990, under the aripucies of the European League against Rheumatism, the Dutch Society of Rheumatology, the Dutch League against Rheumatism, and the Dutch Kidney Foundation.

For further details please contact: IMEDEX, Bruistensingel 144, PO Box 3283, NL-5203 DG's-Hertogenbosch, The Netherlands.

Immunotherapy of the rheumatic diseases

The first international symposium on the immunotherapy of the rheumatic diseases will take place from 20 to 22 February 1991, in London, England.

For details please contact: Professor G S Panayi, Rheumatology Unit, United Medical and Dental Schools, Guy's Hospital, London SE1 9RT, England.

British Cervical Spine Society

A meeting of the British Cervical Spine Society will be held on 9/10 November 1990 at the Postgraduate Centre, City Hospital, Nottingham.

Subjects will include: spinal cord monitoring, cervical manipulation—Good or bad? Deadline for submission of abstracts is 14 September 1990.

For further information contact Mr H McKim Thomas, Department of Paediatric Orthopaedics, Floor D East Block, University Hospital, Nottingham, NG7 2UH (tel: 0602 421421, ext 43244).

Biological agents in autoimmune disease

A conference entitled 'Early decisions in disease modifying antirheumatic drug development. II. Biologic agents in autoimmune disease' will be held on 13–14 September 1990, in San Francisco, California. It is sponsored by the Arthritis Foundation, the American College of Rheumatology, the American Society for Clinical Pharmacology and Therapeutics, the Food and Drug Administration, and the National Institutes of Health.

The focus of the conference is on the newly emerging therapeutic applications to rheumatic diseases of a variety of biological response modifiers. Preclinical and clinical data will be reviewed in the context of known and possible pathogenic mechanisms present in rheumatoid arthritis and other autoimmune diseases.

For further information contact Marianne H Kaple, Arthritis Foundation, 1314 Spring Street, NW Atlanta, GA 30309, USA (tel: 404 872 7100).

Book reviews


As in the first edition of 1984, the book is divided into three sections. The first reviews basic aspects of peripheral, central, and psychological mechanisms of pain. The second describes clinical aspects of disease in which pain predominates, and the third part details available therapeutic modalities. The chapters are written by a large number of authors of international repute. There are several new subjects and new authors.

I did not read every page but decided to read in detail chapters that I had found weak in the first edition, and to scan the remainder page by page. I also used the book as a 'bench text' for a week, and looked up each condition that I met in my pain relief clinic during that week.

It is disappointing, if not surprising, that advances in the basic science of pain mechanisms remain far ahead of progress in developing treatments that actually relieve patients of their pain. If one were to read this book expecting to find solutions to all the intractable pain problems that clinicians so commonly meet—for example, postherpetic neuralgia, chronic back pain, and pain from brachial plexus lesions, one would be unsuccessful, and perhaps a little naive.

My use of the book as a bench text was on the whole useful, providing alternative and refreshing views on problems met with frequently, and allowing easy access by the index to information about conditions seen more rarely. I was slightly surprised on looking up intractable angina to find no treatments mentioned beyond surgery and standard drugs. I have many referrals of patients because these are not providing relief. A review of work done on peripheral stimulation, dorsal column stimulation, and intrathecal opiate administration in this condition would have been valuable, even if the conclusions were not optimistic. The extensive basic section is a delight and has been updated significantly in many places.

Despite these minor criticisms this is a magnificent book, and the new edition is fully justified. At £95 it is perhaps not for the personal shelves of every clinician, but it should be in every medical library, and on the shelves of every pain relief clinic for ready access. For research purposes the indexing is good and the bibliographies are relevant.

R W JOHNSON
Bristol Royal Infirmary, Marlborough Street, Bristol BS2 8HW