Notes and news

Blind and disabled customers' telephone calls

It is encouraging to note that blind and disabled people who are unable to use 'phone books will not have to pay for calls to directory inquiries when British Telecom introduces a charge in 1991, but they will benefit nevertheless from new lower call charges being introduced at the same time. Under the new arrangements blind and disabled people will first have to register with British Telecom using a free linkline number 0800 919195. After certification by a health or community worker they will be issued with a card with large print or braille if necessary. A new three digit number will be set up linking calls to a special bureau in Sheffield specifically designed to answer their inquiries. They will then have to give their PIN number and name. As soon as their PIN has been validated they can ask for their two directory inquiry searches as at present.

Interscience world conference on inflammation

The 4th interscience world conference on inflammation will take place in Geneva, Switzerland, from the 15 to 18 April 1991. The official sponsors include the International League Against Rheumatism and the European League Against Rheumatism.

Three Nobel prize winners will be among the participants. A series of papers will be presented by research teams from around the world, including Dr George H Hitchings, Wellcome Research Laboratories, North Carolina, United States; Professor Sir John Vane of the William Harvey Research Institute, St Bartholomew's Hospital Medical College, London; and Professor Bengt Samuelsson, Karolinska Institute, Stockholm. Subjects will include the role of chemical mediators released by the endothelium.

For further details please contact the Organizing Secretariat, 4th Inwin, PO Box 112, 1218 Grand-Saconnex, Geneva, Switzerland.

Health professionals in rheumatology

The IVth international symposium for health professionals in rheumatology (with EULAR support) will be held at the Old Swan Hotel, Harrogate, from the 10 to 13 June 1992.

There will be parallel sessions of interest to all health professionals in rheumatology, including nurses, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, social workers, psychologists, pharmacists, rehabilitationists, and rheumatologists.

For further details please contact: Dr H A Bird, Royal Bath Hospital, Cornwall Road, Harrogate, North Yorkshire HG1 2PS, United Kingdom. Tel 0423 507526. Fax 0423 52 378.

BSR basic course in rheumatology

The rheumatology unit of the University Department of Medicine, Bristol Royal Infirmary, Bristol, are running a BSR basic course in rheumatology from 23 to 24 May 1991, at Burwells Lodge, Bristol.

This course is aimed at MRCP junior medical staff who are starting or considering rheumatology training. The meeting will be patient oriented and based on small groups.

For more information contact the rheumatology unit: tel 0272 282906.

McLeod/ARC chair in rheumatology

We would like to congratulate Professor R D Sturrock on his appointment to the McLeod/ARC chair in rheumatology at the University of Glasgow. The chair is in part funded by the McLeod bequest and in part by the Arthritis and Rheumatism Council, and will include some laboratory support. It is the first of the new chairs in the faculty of medicine in Glasgow, which will be sited within the department of medicine.

Book review

New Technologies in Metabolic Bone Disease. Ed John C Stevenson. (Pp 287; £60.) Guildford, Surrey: Butterworth, 1990. ISBN 0-7236-0898-9.

This 'state of the art' review of the methods currently in use to study calcium and phosphate homeostasis and skeletal turnover in health and disease is composed of 17 concise but comprehensive chapters written by 28 contributors, all of whom are acknowledged experts in their topics. There are chapters on biochemical markers, bone histology, cell culture, measurement of calciotropic hormones, scintigraphy and isotope studies, magnetic resonance imaging, and three chapters dealing with the different techniques of measuring bone mass, a key question. Although the main emphasis is on techniques, many of which are available at research centres only and not in routine clinical practice, this book has a second aim of reviewing current understanding of the pathogenesis and treatment of the major bone diseases. Appropriately, the first chapter is on the regulation of bone cells and, in particular, the effects of cytokines and growth factors. There are specific chapters on the physiology of parathyroid hormone secretion and parathyroid disorders, calcitonin secretion and action, osteoporosis, the issues surrounding hormone replacement therapy, osteomalacia, the actions of vitamin D, Paget's disease, and collagen disorders. Renal bone disease and malignancy associated hypercalcaemia are not singled out for specific attention but are mentioned by several contributors,

and all the chapters are thoroughly referenced for those wishing to read further.

It is a well produced and finished book. The chapters complement each other well, and most are written with admirable clarity, which should enable clinicians and scientists in all interested disciplines to read with comfort. The detailed contents list and thorough indexing contribute to this accessibility. Deficits are few and mostly lie in the chapter on photon absorptiometry techniques. This is a little brief in its discussion of the issues, does not describe the basic physics of the methods, and makes no mention of the new standard of dual energy x ray absorptiometry (DEXA), though a later chapter does include some relevant comments. A further minor complaint is that the interesting chapter on the increasingly complex and wide ranging effects of vitamin D on many types of cell occurs early on and would perhaps fit better later in the book, say after the chapter on osteomalacia.

Overall, this is a concentrated but very readable review of current understanding and techniques in the investigation of skeletal metabolism and the disease processes in metabolic bone disorders. Clinicians and scientists who are becoming interested in these diseases should find it worthwhile, and those already with an established interest will probably find a good deal of benefit.

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