Book reviews

Pathophysiology and treatment of Paget's disease of bone. J Kanis. (£75.) Dunitz. 1991. ISBN 0-948269-73-1.

One short decade ago most British rheumatologists would have flinched at the idea that the metabolic bone diseases were their responsibility. They preferred to leave even the two most common bone diseases, osteoporosis and Paget's disease, to a motley crew of general physicians, geriatricians, endocrinologists, and even orthopaedic surgeons, few of whom were interested in them. Rheumatologists on mainland Europe have always adopted the broader and more intelligent view that all medical disorders of bones, joints, muscles, and connective tissues are our responsibility.

John Kanis is not a rheumatologist but is one of that rare valuable breed of full time 'ossologists'. He has made a huge contribution to the study of Paget's disease, especially of treatment, and this excellent book is a fitting testimony to his achievements. It has many strengths. It is well written, comprehensive, and authoritative. The exhaustive reference list will be a most useful resource. The book contains much unpublished work expressed clearly in graphical and tabular form. One lingering after-taste is of the profusion and quality of graphs, tables, histological colour plates, radiographs, and line drawings which break up the text and trigger a relish for the next page. As Paget's is my favourite disease I cannot claim to be unbiased.

The account of the newer bisphosphonates is valuable and a strategy of early aggressive treatment with the intention of improving the natural history of the disease is advocated. I agree with his view that the tendency to blame symptoms on associated osteoarthritis is unbalanced and that specific pagetic treatment can produce an often unexpected improvement. Kanis debunks the widely accepted association between Paget's disease and gout.

A reviewer must make some criticisms, but I find this a difficult task and run the risk of nitpicking. Kanis expresses a healthy scepticism of the viral aetiology hypothesis, to which of course he is entitled, but the chapter on 'Aetiology' was the final chapter in the book which I found disconcerting and reminiscent of a John Fowles novel. The genitive of Krebs (he of the Cycle) is Krebs's not Krebs's. I would like to think I would have spent £75 of my own money on this essential book were I deprived of my reviewer's copy, but this hypothesis will not be tested. This book is a unique resource and not overpriced. All rheumatologists—even British ones—must have easy access to it and I am sure that Sir James Paget would have thoroughly enjoyed it.

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The Mystic Garden. D Swinscow. (Pp 150; £9.95.) Tiverton: Halsgrove Press. 1992. ISBN 1-874448-00-0.

Dougal Swinscow, who died recently, had close links with British rheumatology because he worked on the editorial staff of the *BMJ* and was for some years technical editor of the *Annals*. He was a gifted man of many parts, indeed a polymath. He served in the second world war in the RAMC, landing by parachute at Arnhem; his very successful series of articles on medical statistics, which appeared in the *BMJ*, was collectively published as *Statistics at Square One*; and he was an authority on lichens, his book *Macrolichens of East Africa* being the definitive work on the subject.

The Mystic Garden, sadly to be the last book he wrote, examines the effects of various features such as surprise, expectation, contentment, and prospect-refuge symbolism in gardens and landscapes. These are illustrated by examples from numerous gardens, including Castle Drogo, Petworth, Rousham, Stourhead, Killerton, and Knightshayes. They lead to the book's central thesis—the role of a garden in giving expression to its owner's soul, a theme developed against an evident background of extensive religious thought and experience.

The author delighted in most of the hundreds of gardens he visited, though wary of competitive horticulture and vain display:

The growing of those delicious vegetables, leeks and marrows, simply to produce the greatest girth and weight at the expense of edibility is as grotesque as the care the King of Karague (now in Uganda) took in the nineteenth century over fattening his wives so prodigiously that they could not stand.

Similarly, disapprobation is expressed in relation to pretentious hybrids, which, sometimes combined with a repugnancy to any realistic contact with nature, have resulted in the loss of all deeper meaning from many contemporary gardens.

This remarkable, unique book is beautifully written, produced, and illustrated (by Cynthia Rowan); a fitting final work by a good friend and colleague.

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Dr Scott was editor of the *Annals* from 1971 to 1983.