
Ten years ago, there were few books dealing with the pathology and cellular biology of bone and joint disease, and relatively few well written chapters in large textbooks. Over recent years several important contributions, with various missions or targeting of readership, have been added to the literature, with varied success. The new book is aimed at pathologists, orthopaedic surgeons, metabolic bone disease physicians and rheumatologists. It is divided into four main subjects, dealing with diagnosis of bone and joint disease, descriptions of non-neoplastic disease processes, neoplasia, and the cellular biology of bone. The first section has a series of lists, tables and short descriptions dealing with the classification of osteoarticular diseases, followed by a particularly useful description of the imaging of bone which tells the nonspecialist what information he can expect to obtain — mainly from radiographs, though ultrasound, scintigraphy and magnetic resonance imaging are also mentioned.

The main part of the book is contained in sections two and three which describe individual disease processes. This is done with varying success, so that the diagnostic histopathologist, for example, may find that for some subjects there is insufficient detail to help with a particular problem, and he must revert to his standard text books. Whether it is necessary to have good descriptions of the effects of crystal deposition on tissues might be debated, for example, but the reviewer could have wished for more, or for better organisation of the information. Gowty tophi are not mentioned in section two, and receive only a passing reference in section four (cell biology of bone). I could find no reference to oxaalosis (which occurs in bone), but a mention of oxalate crystals in a list of crystals found in synovial fluid (which is extremely rare) again in section four, not section two. Other interesting metabolic diseases such as haemachromatosis receive no mention even though they are of some interest and could at least have been mentioned in the bone and cartilage cellular biology section. These points might seem to suggest that the authors have failed in their task, but this is far from the truth. The task they set themselves in a book of this size is unenviable and they have accomplished much of what they set out to do. Where the book does not provide sufficient detailed information on the more obscure disease processes, it does mostly give a good means of entry into the relevant literature. As might be expected from this group of authors, the sections on congenital and development disorders, metabolic bone disease and arthritis are well executed, while the section on neoplastic disease is especially helpful since it not only gives details of the various subtypes of tumours which are normally omitted from standard large texts, but also gives information about the immunohistochemical labelling characteristics of lesions where these are known.

The final section on the cell biology of bone gives the book a curious back to front feel to it. This section contains detailed embryological descriptions which deal with early development. Curiously, they describe the head and neck without also giving details of the rest of the skeleton. Other parts of this section deal with the structure and biochemistry of skeletal tissues, their growth and reactions to injury. Mention is made of such aspects as cytokines in bone but only in brief. There is enough to whet the appetite without, in this instance, further references being provided for such interest to be followed up easily. In general, the cellular biology section might more logically have made a separate book, or been incorporated within the body of the remainder of the text. A final section on techniques offers down to earth practical guidance which those who are not familiar with the study of bone should find useful.

The illustrations are generally of good quality though there are some which should be improved in the second edition. The extent to which the book is referenced varies between chapters and contributors, some being useful and comprehensive, others offering smaller numbers of key references.

Overall, the authors have attempted a total discussion of the many complex pathological entities and and biological processes occurring in the skeletal system. I believe they have been successful in achieving their aim. There are no major omissions and certainly no difficulties of misrepresentation. Rather, the book often describes complex problems in an easily understood way. It represents good value and will be of particular use to those doctors targeted.


The market for NSAIDs worldwide is considerable and continues to grow, hence the editors’ belief that a second edition of this book would be timely. In comparison with its predecessor (published in 1987), I found this latest edition on the whole more interesting, though a little repetitive in places. The majority of the chapters were contributed by authors from the USA, but there were significant contributions from European, Australian, and Asian authors.

Essentially, the book is divided into four parts. The first updates clinical uses of NSAIDs, including chapters on the biochemical effects on cartilage metabolism, migraine, adult respiratory distress syndrome, and stroke, effects of topical administration, over the counter use and stereoselectivity of racemic NSAIDs. I found the quality of these chapters to vary considerably from very good and informative to rather dull lists of results from clinical trials. The second part is devoted to NSAID toxicity, covering not only gastrointestinal adverse effects but also hepatotoxicity, nephrotoxicity, cutaneous toxicity, and rare adverse reactions to NSAID treatment. I found part three to be somewhat disappointing. This section is entitled “New anti-inflammatory drugs and analogues”, but it actually constitutes drug company reports about individual compounds, some of which are not actually under development as pure NSAIDs or analogues and at least one of the compounds covered has now ceased development. Only one 5-lipoxygenase inhibitor (Zileuton) was covered, with no mention of gastroprotective cyclo-oxygenase inhibitors or selective prostaglandin receptor antagonists currently undergoing research. The fourth part is a single chapter reviewing future therapy for arthritis and, although of interest, is principally about disease modifying antirheumatic drug therapy, which I felt was rather out of context in a book devoted to the mechanisms and clinical uses of NSAIDs.

In general, I found the book interesting and a useful supplement to edition one. However, given the current wave of interest in the new generation of potential NSAIDs, it may have been of greater benefit if the editors had waited a few more years until such time as data from these novel agents may be available.

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