Book reviews

Primer on the Metabolic Bone Diseases and Disorders of Mineral Metabolism. Ed Murray J Favus. (Pp 461, £60). New York: Raven Press, 1993. ISBN 0-7817-0083-3.

This is the second edition of this multi-author publication produced by the American Society for Bone and Mineral Research. The volume is divided into very short chapters by more than 80 authors and covers most of the disorders of bone and mineral metabolism. The problems with a multi-authorship volume are the lack of cohesion between chapters and in the level of expertise devoted to each section. This volume steers a very good compromise between these two extremes. Yes, there is overlap, but this is generally supportive rather than counterproductive. So too are their differences in style. There is, however, a great deal of heterogeneity in the level of referencing and this could be improved. Overall, this variation is not intrusive and is a great credit to the Editor and Associate Editors.

The book is exactly what it claims to be – a primer. It is a very useful first source of reference for students, physicians and scientists who wish to have a short review of any area in bone metabolism. In the case of physicians, it will be useful in all the many specialties that cover some aspects of bone disease. These include rheumatology, but also endocrinology, nephrology, oncology and gynaecology.

The book is compiled mainly by American authors and aimed at the American reader. There are therefore some problems for its wider use. For example, the view that corrected serum calcium should be abandoned, since ionised calcium is available and more appropriate, is clearly not translatable. Perhaps the most difficult area is in therapeutics, as in Europe treatment approaches differ considerably from the USA, particularly in osteoporosis. Agents that are widely available in other countries are relatively neglected, and in some cases ignored. Apart from these deficiencies, I can thoroughly recommend it for all with a passing, or even passionate, interest in bone disease.

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Dubois' Lupus Erythematosus, 4th ed. Eds D J Wallace, B H Hahn. (Pp 950; £102.00). London: Lea and Febiger, 1993. ISBN 08121 15589.

Dubois' Lupus Erythematosus has long been considered the definitive textbook on this subject. This fourth edition, which has been capably edited by Daniel Wallace and Bevra Hahn, is therefore a welcome addition to the rheumatologist's bookshelf. Although this particular edition has undergone a major expansion, both in the number of contributors and chapters, repetition is generally well controlled. For such a large book, the style is highly readable and the bibliography is comprehensive. However, the European reader may well smile, even grimace, at the inevitable Americanisms such as the "alphabetized bibliography" and the cumbersome title to chapter 43, *Hemic and lymphatic disorders in SLE*.

The management sections of *Dubois* have long been a strong point, containing treatment strategies that can be used at the bedside. Nevertheless, I considered the dismissal of methotrexate with a high incidence of leukopenia a little premature as this drug is showing promise. Continuing this partisan approach, the clinical gradings of the BILAG score, 'BI' standing for 'British Isles', are unfortunately misrepresented.

Such a textbook should, however, be available to practising rheumatologists to assist their understanding and management of this fascinating condition.

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