

Book reviews

ABC of rheumatology. M L Snaith, ed. (Pp 90; £14.95.) London: BMJ Publishing Group, 1996. ISBN 0-7279-0997-5.

Why is a book never quite what you expect?

The *ABC of Rheumatology* is targeted at general practitioners and hospital staff who deal with rheumatological problems—a good audience as there is a need for knowledge in both quarters, and if the audience perceives the need they may fork out the required fee. The editors' and authors' aims are met, that is, they cover the major fields and the common diagnoses. This will please all MRCP candidates—I wish the ABC series had been around when I took the exam, especially this edition. The illustrations are a delight, really enhancing the text. Most of the chapters are well structured, incorporating the team concept of care which has been crystallised since the patient charter.

As with all short books I would have liked more. The section on the feet, written by a podiatrist, was excellent—just where we should be heading—but as most of the chapters were written by hospital specialists (with only a few exceptions) it has been impossible to get a balance of what is common and important in general practice.

The book thus serves as a valuable reference source for general practitioners but it does not get across the perspective of what we see. It cannot help us with simple muscular problems and even gives us the wrong concepts for back pain management, since—being a reference work—it has to mention all the 1% of rare disorders when what we really want is confidence in managing the 99% of common ones.

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Operative Arthroscopy. Editor in chief, John B McGinty. (Pp 1375; £203.50.) New York: Lippincott Raven, 1995. ISBN 0-7817-0294-1.

Rheumatologists don't generally regard arthroscopy as essential to their practice. This textbook of arthroscopy clearly describes the advantages of this technique to assist in diagnosis of many rheumatological conditions. It begins with a history of arthroscopy and then describes practical aspects of arthroscopy and anaesthetic procedures. There are useful sections on documentation, complications of arthroscopy, and education. Chapters dedicated to arthroscopy in athletes, children, and patients with communicable disease including HIV are most useful.

The bulk of the textbook concentrates on joint-specific arthroscopy, with sections on joint imaging, including arthrography and CT and MRI scanning. The advantages and disadvantages of these various techniques is clearly described. Why the chapter on imaging of the knee appears in the section of "basic principles" and not in the knee section is, however, a mystery. The technique of arthroscopy of a particular joint is most useful. Carpal tunnel syndrome is described in depth, with clear paragraphs on anatomical considerations, pathogenesis, diagnosis, and treatment. The chapter author clearly advocates arthroscopic release over open surgery but recognises the debate in a section entitled "Controversies of endoscopic release". The chapter has clear line drawings and arthroscopic pictures at a number of stages during the procedure. Some chapters, for instance "Office operative arthroscopy", have little relevance to current European practice.

The arthroscopic and radiological photographs, along with the line drawings, are very clear and illustrate the text well.

The text is well referenced with a good range of American and European journals. The authors are nearly all American, with David Dandy the only UK contributor.

My orthopaedic colleagues feel that this is very valuable textbook with clear description of arthroscopic and operative technique, along with indications and expected findings. For the rheumatologist the detailed section on orthoscopic technique is not particularly valuable but a knowledge of what is feasible in these days of minimally invasive surgery is of great importance. This book provides a well balanced view of arthroscopy and has much to recommend it.

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Advances in Experimental Medicine and Biology. Volume 376. **Glycoimmunology.** Edited by A Alavi and J S Axford. (Pp 295; \$89.50.) New York: Plenum Publishing Corporation, 1995. ISBN 0-306-45102-6.

The view of many biologists that the business part of a glycoprotein molecule is the polypeptide structure and that the carbohydrate portion is merely the icing on the cake has been rightly challenged in recent years. This came about driven mainly by the seminal observation on the relative lack of galactose bearing oligosaccharide structures in the immunoglobulin G of patients with rheumatoid arthritis. Since then glycobiology has become the focus of considerable research as the role of oligosaccharides in both health and disease has come under scrutiny. Glycoimmunology, a rapidly evolving field and the subject of this book, is the study of the carbohydrate moieties of glycoconjugates as an integral component of the immune system. Interest in this area has matured to a stage where major international meetings have been dedicated purely to this research field. This book summarises the proceedings of one such meeting, that is, the Third Jenner International Glycoimmunology Conference, held at IL Ciocco Tuscany in October 1994. The aim of the meeting was to bring together leading academic and commercial researchers, at the forefront of glycosylation and immunology, to review and focus on applied and basic research relating to glycoimmunology and its clinical implications.

This book's strengths and weaknesses both stem from the fact that it is the proceedings of a meeting where the editors had (presumably) little control over the material presented. As a result, the text is made up of a series of "chapters" of variable quality and content. There is no set presentation format between the chapters, particularly noticeable with the referencing, and some contributions are no more than relatively uninformative one page abstracts. There are, however, some very up to date and welcome additions to the literature contained within this text. Notably, the review on glycan and glycosyl transferase structure and distribution is excellent and very comprehensive. It covers the cellular and tissue distribution of these enzymes, their molecular biology, and the effect this has on carbohydrates. It also describes the effects of hormones, cytokines, and exogenous chemicals on their expression and activity. There follow a range of chapters on applied glycoscience, some of which have only a passing relevance to immunology but could, I suppose, be viewed as interesting background reading. There is also a chapter on T cell apoptosis that seems strangely out of place in this text.

The chapters on the glycosylation status of IgG are the most numerous, with a comprehensive coverage of the work from the role of free radicals in post-secretory modifications to the distribution and activity of the enzymes controlling immunoglobulin glycosylation and the possible role in pathology. Other topics covered are IgA glycosylation in disease; glycosylation of acute phase proteins; interactions of cell

adhesion molecules with sugars; and assorted other bits on heparan and dermatan sulphate.

Although there are now two new journals dedicated to glycosylation research this is the first book to address this subject, although at least one other has now been published, and as such more than adequately fills this gap in the market, being of

interest to both clinicians and basic scientists with an interest in glycosylation, as well as rheumatologists, immunologists, and glycobiologists.

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The Osteoarthritis Research Society (OARS) is pleased to announce the 1997 Osteoarthritis Research Award Competition. A prize will be awarded for

US\$15,000

Applications for the award are due 31 January 1997. Prize winners will be announced at the Third International OARS Congress to be held 7-10 January 1997 in Singapore.

Applications should be sent to the Statistiska Läkemedels- och ABS-Prisnämnden, c/o Statistiska Centralbyråns Universitetsbibliotek, Department of Health, S-141 85 Lund, Sweden. Telephone: +46 40 3715 50. Fax: +46 40 3715 742. E-mail: StatistiskaPrisnämnden@stat.se.

Information on the ABS Congress is available from Eric Almqvist, c/o ABS Executive Director, 1000 Park Center, Laguna Hills, CA, USA. Telephone: +1 714 855 1100. Fax: +1 714 855 2835. E-mail: ABS@abs.com.