

for its use. Chapter five gives the briefest introduction to radiology in obstetrics and of the breast. In "Other imaging procedures" ultrasound, computerised tomography, scintigraphy, digital vascular imaging, and nuclear magnetic resonance are touched on. It is right not to burden the reader with detail, but the different nature of ultrasound from the ionising radiation of conventional x ray examination should have been mentioned and its apparent safety emphasised.

The section on the gastrointestinal tract is handled by approaching the radiology of disease from the symptoms with which the patient presents; this approach has the advantage of retaining the reader's interest but by abandoning that used for other systems there is a risk of confusing the reader. The indications for radiological examination of the small intestine and colon are systematically given and examination of the biliary tract is divided into that for the jaundiced and non-jaundiced patient.

Radiological investigation of the genitourinary tract is well set out, listing the examinations available and their risks. Table 8.2 has the confusing title of "Common radiological problems related to the urinary tract" but is valuable in listing clearly some common *clinical* problems beside their radiological features. Hypertension, renal colic, and renal failure are among them.

Chapter nine skims briefly over the mechanics of arteriography, venography, and lymphangiography and the vascular and lymphatic diseases to which these investigations are applied. The last chapter outlines neuroradiological procedures using the four headings of "Intracranial space occupying lesion," "Subarachnoid haemorrhage," "Trauma," and "Myelography."

Clinical Radiology may be read on several different levels. In its entirety it is a long awaited introduction for the medical student to the basics of clinical radiology. Perused for its illustrations and notes alone, it gives even the most rushed pre-examination student a glimpse of the subject. Extracting the more meaty parts gives the trainee radiologist a comprehensive initial foray into his chosen subject. And, lastly, it may be a blueprint for those who organise the teaching of clinical radiology to undergraduates. It should be on the shelves of every medical school library.

RUTH H PEARSON

For the psychiatrist in training

Drugs in Psychiatric Practice. Ed Peter J Tyrer. (Pp 442; £25.) Butterworths. 1982.

Drugs in Psychiatric Practice is not a book to take on holiday, for most clinicians would develop benzene rings around their eyes if they attempted to read it straight through. At the same time it is not particularly useful as a reference book for, as the editor tells us, by the time it reached the bookshop it was out of date. Justification for its publication is to be found in the attempt to link basic sciences and clinical practice.

Inevitably, neither the basic scientist nor the clinician will be satisfied with the result, for the science is basic and the clinician will not find clear advice on the management of his patients. Despite this, it is the best attempt so far to meet the needs of the psychiatrist in training for a textbook in clinical psychopharmacology.

The first chapters are a useful guide to the classification, pharmacokinetics, and metabolism of drugs used in psychiatry. The review of the normal procedures in the evaluation of psychotropic drugs which follows would have been strengthened by a more detailed account of the controversies surrounding controlled clinical trials and more discussion of the role of ethical committees. It would perhaps have been inappropriate to enter into a detailed discussion of the ethical issues, but many clinicians and investigators are unaware of the role of the ethical com-

mittees in protecting both the patient and the good name of the profession.

The pressure from pharmaceutical companies and the Department of Health and Social Security for placebo controlled studies, the difficulty in recruiting a sufficient number of untreated patients, and the rigour of full and informed consent will make it extremely difficult to secure evaluation of the vast number of new drugs that are now appearing on the market. What is clear from this book is how little difference there is between many of the preparations that have secured a large share of the drug market.

A chapter on the new generation of antidepressant drugs provides a great deal of information but few conclusions. There are new chemical structures and differences in pharmacological properties—some likely to provide important investigative tools—but little evidence of dramatic improvement in therapeutic efficacy. The advice to stick to old and tried remedies remains clinically and economically sound. Other chapters deal with drugs grouped according to clinical use or pharmacology: a useful one on lithium carbonate ranges from its early history to speculations about future treatment. Separate chapters review alcohol, drugs of dependence, and drugs in child psychiatry and psychogeriatric medicine.

The careful reader will be struck by the impressive and growing catalogue of adverse effects associated with these drugs. It seems that the 'eighties will have to meet the delayed costs of those wonder drugs which changed the face of psychiatry in the 'fifties. Vast quantities of antidepressants are prescribed and large quantities swallowed without a dramatic effect on the continuing prevalence or admission rates for depressive disorders. Certainly, large numbers of people suffering from schizophrenia are not living in hospital as they would have done in the first half of this century, but, sadly, many of them are living in worse conditions than a hospital would provide and suffer disabling drug induced akathisia or dyskinesia as well.

With such powerful and dangerous drugs on the market no one should be allowed to prescribe them until he has considered alternatives and, with the help of books such as this, developed the knowledge necessary for their proper use.

SYDNEY BRANDON

Contributors

JANE SYMONDS is a consultant microbiologist at the Guest Hospital, Dudley.

MIKE PRINGLE is a general practitioner in Nottinghamshire.

EDWARD H HARE is an emeritus physician at the Maudsley Hospital, London.

PETER J F BASKETT is a consultant anaesthetist at Frenchay Hospital, Bristol.

RUTH H PEARSON is a consultant radiologist at Queen Mary's Hospital, Roehampton.

SYDNEY BRANDON is professor of psychiatry at the University of Leicester.

Correction

Gloomy paediatric problem

In the review of *The Obese Child* (24 September, p 902) the following sentence should read: "Despite many advantages, skinfolds are little used in clinical practice outside sophisticated auxology services . . ."