

Rheumatology and the heart

Butterworths International Medical Reviews. "Rheumatology 2: the Heart and Rheumatic Disease." Ed Barbara M Ansell and Peter A Simkin. (Pp 292; £24.) Butterworths. 1984.

The Heart and Rheumatic Disease is a book for committed readers: skimmers and dippers will find it heavy going. This is the second in an unusual series, as the editors have chosen to consider how the heart and its various structures are affected by the different rheumatic diseases. The authors come from a variety of specialties and the chapters are devoted to pericarditis, myocardial involvement, conduction disorders, the aortic and the mitral valves, pulmonary and systemic hypertension, coronary vasculitis, current day rheumatic fever, and, finally, diagnostic techniques.

The anatomical/physiological format works wonders for some chapters and is less successful for others. The chapters on pericarditis, myocardial involvement, and conduction disorders are excellent and on their own justify the purchase of this elegantly produced and well illustrated book.

Problems with the format start with the chapters on aortic and mitral valve disease. In parts they are excellent but they become repetitious. They provide useful epidemiological data on the prevalence of all forms of valvular disease and are descriptively useful, but fall down by giving elementary detail on clinical examination and investigation at medical student level. A certain amount of confusion arises when some chapters also include connective tissue disorders such as Hurler's disease, Marfan's syndrome, and osteogenesis imperfecta, and, as usual, Libman Sacks, which is not clinically important, gets more attention than infective endocarditis.

The chapter on pulmonary hypertension is virtually confined to rheumatic heart disease, and I was disappointed to find no mention of pulmonary hypertension in systemic sclerosis and so no mention of captopril. The usual style of the books is resumed in systemic hypertension and contains an interesting section on drug induced lupus syndromes but is scant on practical treatment of established hypertension in systemic lupus erythematosus, polyarteritis, and systemic sclerosis, and the need for rapid and effective control at the first signs of hypertension.

With each successive chapter I was intrigued by the minor variations in description in Wegener's granulomatosis and mixed connective tissue disease, which were repeated in the first class chapter on coronary vasculitis. The chapter on coronary vasculitis included a far better description of assessment of the myocardium,

including the use of radioisotope scans, than the chapter dealing with investigations. Many of the chapters included comprehensive sections on investigation.

Rheumatic fever in the 1980s is another excellent chapter, reminding us of the worldwide problem rather than the putative cases of subacute rheumatic fever seen in Britain. I would have welcomed more on the other streptococcal antibodies, such as deoxyribonuclease B and hyaluronidase that should be sought when the antistreptolysin O titre is negative. One can feel sympathy for the writer of the final chapter; so much of his material on investigation had already been covered by the previous authors.

The references are extremely comprehensive and follow each chapter: the index is comprehensive. On checking the index for two particular diseases, systemic sclerosis was well covered, but for mixed connective tissue disease I was referred to connective tissue disease—mixed, which was not indexed. A few other minor irritations: systemic scleroderma, and one author thought NSAIDs were confined to propionic acid derivatives.

This is a most interesting book, well worth buying for some superb chapters and for reading page by page and chapter by chapter, and only by so doing does the anatomical/physiological basis of this review become apparent.

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In brief . . .

In *The Liver and Biliary System* (Heinemann, £7.95) P W Brunt, M S Losowsky, and A E Read present the first in a series of small books on "Aids to Higher Medical Training" with two objectives. The main aim is to help postgraduates from both the United Kingdom and overseas who are preparing for higher medical examinations; the MRCP(UK) is the particular target. The second aim is to provide a factual disease oriented resumé about current clinical practice in a well established medical discipline. Careful editing has produced a uniformly smooth flowing descriptive and economic style that, together with ample tables and essential line diagrams, helps learning and revision. Further reading is encouraged by important review articles being listed as each chapter ends. The authors' acknowledgment that "the postgraduate has the greatest difficulty in keeping up with advances in the many specialties that now make up internal medicine, and examinations may require knowledge of areas where postgraduate experience has been minimal," may encourage the appropriate examining bodies to review their approach to this problem and perhaps produce guidelines for their candidates if not a syllabus.

"If a child cries it's my fault" is a brave statement for a paediatrician to make, but it was so much part of John Apley's creed that it has become the title for a recently published book of his essays ("*If a Child Cries . . .*"; Butterworth, £9.95). Reading them it is difficult to imagine any of his patients being brought to tears: his affection and respect for them are obvious, particularly in the two sections "Paediatrics growing up" and "Children growing up." Apley's other love was language, and several pieces on the art and pleasures of writing complete a collection which, as its author hoped, should be "read at leisure and for pleasure."

Correction

Rereading Osler

We regret that in the review of *Aequanimitas* by William Osler (28 July, p 245) there was an error in the price quoted. It should have been £40. This book is available (as are all Keynes Press publications) from the Publishing Manager, *British Medical Journal*, BMA House, Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9JR.

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