BOOKS RECEIVED

Clinical problems in sexually transmitted diseases

Edited by D. R. TAYLOR-ROBINSON. 1985. Martinus Nijhoff, The Netherlands. Pp. ix and 337. £55.50.

Medical textbooks are often erudite but heavy reading. This book on clinical problems in sexually transmitted diseases, though still erudite, is written in an easy, instantly readable style. It consists of a collection of chapters written by different eminent authors. The approach taken has been to discuss the common clinical problems and their likely causes, rather than to consider the infectious agents *per se*, and then the conditions they cause. The book does not pretend to cover the whole field of sexually transmitted diseases, but only considers the everyday working problems that a genito-urinary physician is likely to encounter. These problems are divided into those primarily affecting men, those primarily affecting women and, finally, those affecting both sexes.

The first chapter, on criteria for diagnosis, lays out the pitfalls and difficulties of diagnosing sexually transmitted diseases, pointing out, in particular, the insensitivities of the common tests, the effects of observer error and the complications that arise from under-diagnosis—aspects seldom so clearly expressed in print, but extremely useful to remember in practice.

The introduction to the chapter on cervicitis describes the early development of the uterine cervix. This helps to make the appearance of the cervix, especially with naked eye, with and without infection, more understandable. The black and white figures, both in this section and other sections in the book—e.g. in the chapter on genital warts—were very clear with the points from the text well marked. The section on proctitis is also useful as it directs the clinicians' attention to the emotional problems as well as the difficulties in diagnosis.

Even though the book is essentially devoted to sexually transmitted diseases, I was rather disappointed that some mention was not made of other causes of ulceration in the chapter on genital ulceration. Patients with genital ulcers, from any cause, are so often sent to the genito-urinary physician.

This book is undoubtedly excellent for the working physician, discussing the twelve most common clinical problems in sexually transmitted diseases, with extensive bibliographies at the end of each chapter. It is not a book for the exam-swatting undergraduate, but very useful for the post-graduate student interested in the specialty, as a valuable supplement to the standard text book.

E. A. F. DAVIDSON

Mononuclear phagocytes. Characteristics, physiology and function

Edited by RALPH VAN FURTH. 1985. Martinus Nijhoff, Dordrecht, The Netherlands. Pp. xxii and 829. £145.50.

Usually there is little point in publishing conference proceedings as these hardly ever amount to more than a

random collection of experimental observations linked by a commentary hastily compiled in order to conform with the requirements of the conference organisers. Furthermore, any observations of value have usually appeared in the relevant journals long before the proceedings are published. The proceedings of the successive conferences on mononuclear phagocytes are an exception since these have now acquired a scientific status analogous with ecclesiastical synods. Both general and specialist readers can reasonably assume that anything of value will have been included in the monographs and that the peer review is commensurate with that imposed by refereed journals. These successive publications are unchallengeable compendia of the relevant data and informed commentaries. It is just as well that these publications are repositories of true learning because the most recent volume has been produced on a sumptuous scale reflected in a sumptuous price. The standard of print and photographic reproduction is truly magnificent and one has little doubt that many of the illustrations will be "lifted" directly for teaching purposes. The presentation of kinetic data in one illustration on page 248 is particularly striking and something that many investigators will emulate. I was less happy that three successive pages (818-820) should bear but one word *in toto*.

In scientific terms the contributions represent a consolidation of earlier volumes rather than any novel intellectual departures. Monoclonal antibodies figure prominently in terms of defining the phenotype of different macrophage populations at varying stages of activation. The contribution of macrophages to blood coagulation and its disorders receives more attention than has previously been the case. The format of the successive sections of the book is fairly traditional; surface properties, interactions with complement, kinetics, secretion, mobilisation, and membrane activation are all treated in detail. Of particular relevance to microbiologists, there is detailed consideration of the interactions between macrophages on the one hand and parasites such as schistosomes, malaria parasites and leprosy bacilli on the other. The transition from broad description to biochemical analysis is particularly striking in the context of persistent infections and host defence mediated by macrophages. In all, this is the definitive work on the subjects for readers with specialist interests or simply seeking an overall view.

D. DENMAN

Essentials of medical mycology

E. GLYN, V. EVANS and J. C. GENTLES. 1985. Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh. Pp. xi and 195. £14.95.

This concise account of medical fungi, fungal infections and their laboratory investigation is by two university teachers with wide experience and knowledge of what the clinician or medical laboratory scientist needs to know of medical mycology, as seen in the United Kingdom. The

title is apt, and if the purpose of this book was to provide basic information on the characteristics, distribution, diagnosis and treatment of the mycoses for use by those for whom medical mycology is not a major interest, it succeeds admirably.

Unlike many other mycology texts, this does describe the value of serological tests and therapies in current use. It is illustrated with line drawings, black and white photographs showing the clinical features of a number of mycoses, and photomicrographs illustrating the histological appearance of the common fungal pathogens.

This work could be recommended for purchase and prove of value to students preparing for the Royal College of Pathology examinations in Microbiology, and also for clinicians and medical laboratory scientists, but for the fact that it is rather expensive for a paperback printed in Singapore.

R. R. DAVIES

Medical microbiology

Edited by S. BARON. 1986, 2nd ed. Addison-Wesley Publishers Ltd, Wokingham, Berks. Pp. xxvi and 1262. £19.95.

This textbook is divided into six main sections, including immunology, bacteriology, mycology, virology, parasitology and the microbiology of organ systems. These sections are further subdivided into a total of 115 chapters written by over 100 contributors. Editing has, however, resulted in a uniformity of presentation giving consistency to the text. The chapters, which are clearly subdivided and relatively easy to comprehend, present the main facts about individual subjects and include useful "general concept" sections. However, the text is generally poorly provided with illustrations, none of which are in colour. Many of the photographs, particularly the photomicro-

graphs of stained micro-organisms, are difficult to interpret despite adequate legends.

The first section of the book deals with immunology. A clearly defined general introduction is followed by chapters detailing the fundamentals of the subject. However, some sections such as those about blood group antigens and tumour immunology do not seem appropriate for a text entitled "Medical Microbiology". The second section, on bacteriology, starts with structure and classification. In the subsequent chapters unnecessary detail tends to overshadow more fundamental facts. For example, detailed biochemical tests are outlined together with the recipes of typical culture media. An outstanding chapter, both easy to read and well illustrated, on antimicrobial chemotherapy is consequently almost hidden amongst others in this section.

The reader has to wait until Chapter 28 before he meets his first pathogen in detail. The following chapters deal with individual groups of bacteria in a succinct but authoritative manner, giving a general description of their structure, associated diseases and principal characteristics. At the end of each chapter the basics of therapy are outlined but the details given are too brief to be a useful source of information for the clinician. The next sections on mycology, virology and parasitology follow a similar pattern with classification and details on the associated pathogens. They are well presented but, here too, details of specific chemotherapy at the end of each chapter are brief.

In summary, the material presented in this text book is comprehensive, authoritative and relatively up to date. The authors must be congratulated on their success in bringing together the different disciplines that find a place under the "umbrella" of medical microbiology. Much of the information is suitable for medical students but unfortunately the size of the volume may act as a repellent to students starting out to learn medical microbiology.

T. ELLIOTT

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