Book Reviews

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Respiratory Medicine, by Norman M. Johnson, Pocket Consultant Series, Oxford, Blackwell Scientific, 1986, 370 pp, price not given.

Respiratory Medicine is part of a collection of compact paperback reference books which aims to provide the clinician with a guide to commonly encountered diseases and problems in selected fields. This book is specifically designed for use by senior medical students, house physicians, and nonmedical specialty physicians to use when on call or when studying for examinations. It is not meant to be read from cover to cover and is not intended to be extremely useful for those with advanced training in internal medicine and its subspecialties.

Some of the sections of the book describe history taking, the physical examination, investigations, some important diseases, and other clinical problems. The work concludes with appendixes of NHS prescriptions, as well as useful addresses (all of which are of limited value to those in the United States).

The chapters dealing with history taking and the physical examination are thorough, but not exhaustive. Diagrams further clarify explanations of the chest inspection and abnormal signs on auscultation. A table of physical signs of chest disease is especially useful. The Investigations section outlines the state of the art in diagnostics, including discussions ranging from sputum examination, computed tomography, and gallium scans to the actual performance and interpretation of bronchoalveolar lavage. The information in the subsections varies in quality and quantity. For example, the value of chest radiography is nicely illustrated with images of lobar consolidation, lung collapse, pleural effusions, and diffuse reticulonodular as well as five-lobe multiple nodular infiltrates. Yet, the description of the sputum examination is unnecessarily curt.

A handy nomogram for interpretation of arterial blood gases, as well as the oxyhemoglobin dissociation curve, are supplied. No mention is made of the indications for and the importance of the Bartlett brush for the collection of lower-airway microbiology specimens. Because this book was written in England, some tests will be unfamiliar to the American reader, as they are no longer routinely performed here. A section of common radiographic presentations is replete with lists of differential diagnoses. The chapters entitled "Some Common Diseases" and "Other Clinical Problems" are generally well written and briefly outline diagnostic signs, complications, therapy, and follow-up for most of the important respiratory diseases. Once again, however, the American reader will be confronted with some unfamiliar British drug names.

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Topics in Gastroenterology, vol 12, ed by D. P. Jewell and P. R. Gibson, Oxford, Blackwell Scientific, 1985, 318 pp, $44.95.

The 1984 Oxford Postgraduate Course in Gastroenterology has produced its twelfth volume of *Topics in Gastroenterology.* This annual course updates specific areas of gastroenterology and the editors have subsequently prepared a volume of excellent quality. As is true for most books of this type, the individual chapters provide a brief review of a limited subject matter, combined with an update of the relevant recent literature.

The topics (alcohol and the digestive system, pancreas, ulcerative colitis, mucosal defense mechanisms, and irritable bowel syndrome) are pertinent to all physicians involved in clinical medicine. The chapters within each of these sections are more limited in scope and their value to the general practitioner will be variable. The chapter dealing with the small-intestinal effects of alcohol is well written and complete. The authors cover a variety of aspects and provide substantial references. The review of gastrointestinal mucus is also well written and is an excellent overview for specialists and nonspecialists alike. The chapter about advances in surgical management of ulcerative colitis gives nonsurgeons a well-illustrated view of the techniques and complications of current operative measures. The author's vast experience can be readily appreciated, and while his preference is evident, the operative choices are presented fairly and equally. While of limited value to most practicing physicians, the chapter covering graft-versus-host disease and the gastrointestinal tract is an outstanding review.

The book is not without minor problems, however. Some chapters are weaker than others, and this probably reflects the current state of medical knowledge

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