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

Cleve Clin J Med 54:233–235, May/June 1987

rather than the authors' lack of ability. Readers will occasionally find themselves wanting more information about a particular subject. Also, one statement about the appearance of alpha-1 antitrypsin granules in the livers of patients with alcoholic liver disease was traced back to the original work and found to be supported by a personal observation. It is this reviewer's belief that a personal observation should remain just that until it can be supported by data subject to critical analysis and should not be given the apparent validity of a reference until that time.

Overall, *Topics in Gastroenterology* will be a good reference source for physicians who wish to update their knowledge.

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Surgical Gastroenterology, by T. V. Taylor, Oxford, Blackwell Scientific, 1985, 574 pp, price not given.

This book addresses surgical problems from the oral cavity to the anus. Additional chapters cover gastrointestinal bleeding, the acute abdomen, surgical sepsis, peritonitis, nutrition, obesity, upper gastrointestinal endoscopy, and stomas and are a unique addition to the primary topics covered in most texts of surgery of the alimentary tract.

In general, the text includes few illustrations and photographs. Although most areas of surgical gastroenterology are mentioned, some are discussed too briefly. The chapter dealing with the esophagus does not mention the use of the EEA stapling device for anastomoses. Endoscopic laser therapy for palliation of obstructing gastroesophageal cancers is not discussed. There is little mention of computed tomography or ultrasound-guided percutaneous drainage of intra-abdominal abscesses. The chapter about surgical diseases of the pancreas is generally good, however, the entity of pancreas divisum is not covered.

On the other hand, the discussion of peptic ulcer disease is thorough. The chapter dealing with the biliary tract contains an exceptionally good discussion with diagrams and radiographs. A good working classification of jaundice is proposed in the chapter about the liver. Crohn's disease and mucosal ulcerative colitis are covered in some detail. The chapter about carcinoma of the rectum discusses sphincter-saving operations, in addition to the standard abdominal perineal resection.

Medical students and junior surgical residents may benefit from this volume, although most of the discussions are not thorough enough for the senior resident or practicing surgeon.

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Bile Pigments and Jaundice: Molecular, Metabolic, and Medical Aspects, vol 4 of the Liver: Normal Function and Disease series, ed by J. Donald Ostrow, New York, Marcel Dekker, 1986, 744 pp, $99.75.

This book will undoubtedly be the definitive text on the subject of bilirubin, from the biophysical-chemical and metabolic perspective to topics of clinically marginal relevance, for some time. Research progress in this field has been extremely slow due to the highly labile nature of the bilirubin molecule, resulting from its extreme susceptibility to oxidation, especially when exposed to light. Accordingly, most experimental studies with bilirubin need to be carried out in the dark (which is discouraging to most investigators who more often than not find themselves in the dark anyway). However, this type of work has provided the basis of phototherapy of neonatal jaundice.

Although the book does cover clinical aspects of jaundice (i.e., hyperbilirubinemia), it is more a compendium, thus would be more valuable to the investigator with a basic science orientation rather than to the clinician. Of the 24 chapters, this reviewer found the treatment in chapter 4 of the physical chemistry of bile pigments and porphyrins, with particular reference to bile, to be the most erudite and analytically novel of the various sections.

Bile Pigments and Jaundice is current, well written, attractively bound, extremely well referenced, and generally well illustrated.

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Mechanical Ventilation: Physiological and Clinical Applications, by Susan P. Pilbeam, Denver, Multi-Media Publishing, 1986, 376 pp, price not given.

This work outlines the clinical applications of mechanical ventilation. The first four chapters are a discussion of the physiological mechanisms leading to respiratory failure. Unfortunately, the author has not incorporated the pathophysiological discussion into the rest of the text. The section dealing with pathophysiological causes of hypoxemia does not list the six basic mechanisms (hypoventilation, ventilation-perfusion mismatching, shunt physiology, diffusion impairment, low inspired-oxygen concentration, and decreased cardiac output). In addition, there is virtually no discussion of the mechanisms of respiratory muscle fatigue. The absence of this discussion is particularly noticeable in chapter 10, which reviews the various techniques of weaning from mechanical ventilation. Also, the author does not stress the necessity to rehabilitate the ventilator-dependent patient so that, ultimately, mechanical ventilation can be discontinued.

In general, *Mechanical Ventilation* falls short of its intended goals. The absence of a good physiological discussion and lack of integration of reference sources