

Book reviews

Progress in Clinical and Biological Research Series. Vol. 108. Massive Transfusion in Surgery and Trauma

Edited by J.A. Collins, K. Murawski and A. William Shafer. 235 × 155 mm. Pp. 319 + x. Illustrated. 1982. New York: Alan R. Liss. £25.00.

For a long time I have had doubts about the wisdom of publishing conference proceedings. Their contents are rarely subjected to critical review before being accepted and are frequently unedited. The studies reported are often preliminary and many of the papers are anecdotal. I am afraid that having read this particular volume I have come to the conclusion that the publication of conference proceedings should be banned. The chapters are a jumbled mixture of complex haematology and reviews of other people's work. The clinician will find little to guide him on the use of massive transfusion in surgery and trauma.

The panel discussion at the end of the book can only be described as an insult to intelligence as the following extract from p. 228 reveals: Dr Moss: 'I am almost suspicious, John, you are throwing a hooker there. But this time you didn't.' Dr Collins: 'No, I didn't. I am going to play this one straight. Believe it or not.' Dr Moss: 'I know this guy.' Dr Collins: 'So help me.'

I believe that books containing this sort of unedited nonsense are an embarrassment to anyone who believes in a scientific approach to medical practice. Of course, it is a poor hen that cannot find a morsel in a muck heap and obviously there are a few items of interest in this book but I cannot commend it to my colleagues or to libraries as worthy of shelfspace.

M.L. Irving

Atlas of Stomal Pathology

A. Franchini, B. Cola and P. Stevens. 285 × 215 mm. Pp. 108. Colour and black-and-white. 1983. Verona: Cortina International. L60 000.

This Atlas is, essentially, a product of the Italian renaissance. Lavishly illustrated in the style of Versalius, it focuses on the stoma which is presented at the centre of the theatre in the Paduan medical model. This is a distinctly different approach from an English post-Bentham model which endeavours to place the patient in Society with the therapists observing and facilitating his adjustment to the new discipline his iatrogenic stoma imposes.

The colour photographs are remarkable for their clarity and for the nastiness of some of them. They do tell a story but, hopefully, much of the story is no longer extant in UK medical practice. For instance, colostomy perforation by rigid irrigation tubes is only a memory since soft cone-shaped irrigators were introduced.

As a collection of pictures this book is valuable, as a text on stoma care it is very disappointing. The unsightliness of the stoma complications illustrated must indicate that many of the patients have psychosocial problems yet there is only half a page of text devoted to 'psychic disorders'. The section on sexual relationships is skimpy too: there is a superficial review of male neurological problems after actual excision but the more important area of behavioural adaptation to sexual partners is not mentioned.

The translation, from Italian, is poor and not idiomatic, neither English nor American, highlighting the confusion our various dialects must now present to the non-Anglo-Saxon. Archaic words and verbalizations abound and sent me to my dictionary and lexicon for guidance.

The concept of an atlas of stoma care is attractive, but the text and referencing needs to be as good and as relevant as the pictures. It is a pity the producers of this book did not exercise much tighter control over these aspects of the publication.

H.B. Devlin

Les Cancer du Colon, du Rectum et de l'anus

H. Pujol, C. Solassol, J.B. Dubois and H. Joyeaux. 240 × 160 mm. Pp. 201 + vi. Illustrated. 1983. Paris: Masson. 175F.

This soft covered short monograph deals in a concise manner with tumours of the large bowel. Successive chapters deal with epidemiology, prevention, pre-malignant conditions, diagnosis and treatment including the management of recurrent and metastatic disease

and 'second look' surgery. The text is clear and up to date. There are numerous illustrations, in the form of simple diagrams, and there is a short but up-to-date and international biography at the end of the volume.

For French-speaking surgical trainees, this book will provide a rapid revision of this important group of cancers.

H. Ellis

1982 Year Book of Cancer

Edited by Clark, Cumley and Hickey. 235 × 155 mm. Pp. 477. Illustrated. 1982. London: Year Book. £33.00.

The 147 member editorial board has once more given us a volume of cancer subjects for our enlightenment from what they consider the very best of oncologic literature. It is a well produced book and undoubtedly contains good material. However, it is not primarily intended for surgeons. Although it will surely find its way into library shelves to maintain a series, I seriously wonder for whom it is intended and who will take it down from the shelves. Perhaps a lecturer under pressure or a researcher wishing hastily to familiarize himself with another parallel field of work. The volume cannot replace the ultimate requirement of returning to the original paper on a subject and reading it in full. Surely there are now better ways of searching the literature than buying a year book in hard covers with much material that will not be of interest.

Having made these general criticisms of the whole concept of the series, there is some good material of surgical interest – particularly on reconstruction and rehabilitation and the section on colon, rectum and anus.

It is a book in which one can browse (even on American-Soviet Publications in the Biomedical Sciences) when devoid of other reading material – perhaps between cases in the theatre – rather than buy for a personal library. It is reminiscent of those books of abstracts of large meetings which without the discussion at the meeting never quite come to life. The little editorial comments at the end of papers pointing out their relevance are sometimes didactic but can be tiresome.

H. White

Clinical Nuclear Medicine

M.N. Maisey, K.E. Britton and D.L. Gilday. 250 × 190 mm. Pp. 525 + xiv. Illustrated. 1983. London: Chapman & Hall. £35.00.

In general this is a good book on nuclear medicine and its clinical application. The editors have adopted successfully a problem orientated approach. Despite multiple authorship, the book has a uniformity of style and layout. Perhaps one criticism of the book lies in an inadequate comparative evaluation of nuclear medicine investigative procedures *vis-à-vis* other investigational modalities. Thus in the deep vein thrombosis section, in addition to radio-isotope techniques for the diagnosis of deep vein thrombosis, ultrasound doppler techniques and electrical impedance plethysmography are described but not contrast venography. Furthermore the limitations of some of the isotope imaging techniques are not emphasized sufficiently.

The book is primarily written for the clinician and has therefore few technical details. Although it is intended for trainees in nuclear medicine, in my view surgical trainees would benefit by reference to it.

A. Cuschieri

Present Management of Ulcerative and Crohn's Colitis

D.J. Westbroek, K.G. Tan and A.B. Bijnen. 245 × 175 mm. Pp. 285. Illustrated. 1982. Brada: Medical World Press. No price given.

Reading this book has reinforced my view that publication of the proceedings of a symposium rarely results in a production of worthwhile quality, unless the editors exhibit a remarkable degree of ruthlessness and consistency. These attributes are notably absent in this volume, prepared from submitted manuscripts following a two day meeting in Rotterdam in January 1982. The participants included many of the acknowledged authorities on inflammatory bowel disease in Europe and North America, and a great deal of