Book reviews


Many of this journal's readers practise dermatology, and it behoves those, mainly in the United Kingdom, who do not specialise in skin diseases to know about dermatology. It is also to the detriment of genitourinary medicine that the role of dermatology in its practice has been played down in recent years. At the spring meeting of the Medical Society for the Study of Venereal Diseases held in Lyons in 1971 I showed that a quarter of the patients seen in genitourinary practice had dermatological manifestations of disease. Since that time, with the advent of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) disease, a working knowledge of dermatology has become still more important.

It is a joy to delve into Year book of dermatology 1988. It is a reasonable price, and is cheaper still for residents. Although much of its contents are pure dermatology, at least half of the several hundred abstracts of papers will be useful to genitourinary physicians. Some very useful statistics given at the start of the book include those concerning the recent increase in syphilis in the United States of America compared with the decrease in other infectious diseases, except for AIDS, and three tables on various aspects of the statistics on AIDS in the USA and world wide to 1987. At the end of the book is a list of key review articles on dermatology related subjects including AIDS, disorders of pregnancy, fungal disorders, retinoids, and treatment.

In between are 22 chapters packed with well written abstracts, often with pithy comments on the paper selected. After one article entitled "Clinical and microbiological evaluation of 46 episodes of genital ulceration", selected from this journal, is the comment "to think that we can miss the diagnosis in one of three cases of genital ulceration is very humbling. This problem will become more severe as sexually transmitted diseases (STD) clinics are absorbed by infectious diseases services at the expense of dermatology. In the future, our trainees will become as inexperienced in diagnosing STD with skin manifestations as the non-dermatologists are."

In the section on treatment are some important papers on ketoconazole in fungal disorders, and permethrin in the treatment of lice and scabies. Drug eruptions are dealt with well. AIDS crops up not only in the chapter on viral infections, as do genital herpes and condyloma acuminata, but in chapters such as those on vascular disorders ("Telangiectasis of the anterior chest in homosexual men." Fallon T, et al. Ann Intern Med 1986;105:679-82). Genital skin disorders, including Zoon’s balanitis and lichen sclerosus et atrophicus, are very adequately covered.

I wouldn’t have missed the Year book of dermatology for anything. It keeps one up to date and is marvellous for the sort of doctor who wants to know why cocaine abusers get thanllium poisoning. Dear reader, look at page 137.

Michael Waugh


A new edition of this book after an interval of eight years is welcome. As the authors note in the introduction, there is increased awareness of the size of the problem of sexually transmitted disease (STD) in developing countries. The wide range of different STDs, especially viral conditions, seen in the West is being increasingly recognised in the tropics. In addition, for various reasons the long recognised infections may present with advanced features that disappeared in the West with the advent of antimicrobials. For all these reasons the authors have extensively revised, and in some cases completely rewritten, their text. The total number of pages has increased from 228 to 357. The book is now organised into three sections — (1) basic considerations, (2) STD and related aspects of other conditions, and (3) control of STD. As well as introducing a chapter on viral infections, including a section on human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), the section on syphilis is longer. The chapter on chlamydial and related disease has been expanded, and the cumbersome term "non-specific genital inflammatory disease" has been dropped in favour of the phrase "non-gonococcal and non-specific infections". The chapter on control of STD has been expanded, but the section on starting and developing a treatment service is retained. There is more on STD management in a rural medical centre. The appendices on managing common conditions, such as genital ulceration and urethral discharge in the absence of microscopy, are retained.

In part two, the clinical section, the striking feature is the space given to viral conditions and STD associated syndromes. In the former the section on HIV infection is up to date considering the rapid advances in our understanding of this virus and its effects. There is a useful comprehensive table on managing opportunistic infections and related diseases. The chapter on STD related syndromes considers topics such as epididymitis and pelvic infection, which is useful for practitioners facing clinical problems who do not have time to peruse cross references, for example from chlamydial to gonococcal infection. As in the previous edition, there is emphasis on the wider differential diagnosis that must be considered in the tropics. Though the chapter on genital manifestation of some tropical conditions covers various topics, some practitioners might have welcomed a little more on the clinical problems presented by tuberculosis and amoebiasis. The quality of the black and white illustrations is somewhat better than in the first edition.

With the continuing increase in world wide air travel, everyone practising genitourinary medicine should be familiar with the varying problems of STDs and related conditions in all parts of the world. The second edition of this book fulfils an important need for everyone in this specialty.

R N Thin


This is volume 44 in an Immunology Series edited by Noel Rose and Zdenek Trnka, and its aim is to provide up to date information about the pathogenesis of AIDS. The importance of AIDS is summarised well by Dr Rose in his introduction, where he comments that "the epidemic has been with us for less than a decade yet the extent of its spread and the degree of pathogenicity match those of the great epidemics of the past". The importance and scale of the epidemic is further exemplified in a foreword by Jonas Salk, where he notes that "a vast body of new knowledge has accumulated with unprecedented rapidity and one wonders what might have been our fate if the spread of HIV had occurred before the development of molecular biology".

This particular volume was edited by Jay Levy and, not surprisingly therefore, it has a very definite Californian bias with 29 of the 34 authors coming from the University of California at San Francisco. It contains 21 chapters covering subjects such as the molecular biology, detection, pathogenesis, immunology, and pathology of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection. There is extensive coverage of epidemiology, Africa, Haiti, haemophilia, transfusion recipients, paediatrics, and heterosexual
transmission. The 82% of those affected, however, namely homosexual and bisexual men and drug users, merit only a few specific paragraphs. The other chapters are devoted to describing a San Franciscan style comprehensive care system as well as the neoplasms, infections, and other manifestations associated with AIDS or HIV infection. There is a concluding chapter on vaccine mechanisms with particular reference to HIV. The largest contribution is by the editor himself on the detection and pathogenesis of HIV, which has a staggering 296 references. This chapter provides a brief history of the early discoveries in virology and a succinct account of the up to date knowledge of the virology of HIV infection.

Nearly 40% of the chapters are devoted to clinical problems, and the mix of clinical information and basic science should appeal to the interested clinician. The book is well illustrated with numerous tables, diagrams, electron micrographs, and histopathology sections. There are 16 colour photographs of common clinical conditions, though it does not set out to be a definitive clinical atlas.

As I have already inferred, the book is extremely well referenced and contains most of the definitive early references on the subject. This in itself would be one reason to acquire it, and it is without doubt a useful authoritative work for those working with all aspects of HIV. It is, however, let down by a rather scanty index of only 11 pages. In addition the editor claims that “all sections have been updated through the beginning of this year to include the most recent relevant references to the topics”. Unfortunately that statement is undated and, as the book was published in 1989, I can only assume that the year referred to was 1988. In fact 10 of the 21 chapters contain no references from 1988, a startling omission for most topics.

The purpose of the book, according to the editor, Dr Levy, “was to review the historic events leading to the recognition of AIDS and to describe the many facets of the virus and the disease complex”. On the whole the book has fulfilled its purpose, and its major deficiencies relate to the paucity of data presented regarding the two largest risk activities. I suspect that the price will unfortunately limit its appeal in the UK to enthusiasm of libraries only, but I recommended it for this purpose.

R P Brestle


This book is based on a series of 64 case histories commented on by 71 specialists—perhaps the ultimate in multiauthorship for a book of only 437 pages! There are two types of book on a specialist subject: one gives an overview or interpretation for the non-specialist; the other deals in depth with specific topics, presupposing a background knowledge of the speciality concerned. In some respects this book falls between the two in that it inevitably cannot provide enough material for an in depth discussion for the specialist, whereas those not familiar with dermatological conditions will be left with some ideas about problems in specific conditions, but not an overall picture. For dermatologists this could prove frustrating in view of the limited space for discussion of each condition. On the other hand “the physicians (presumably non-dermatologists) who cope with skin ailments” for whom the book is intended may find that its usefulness is limited by a lack of information on criteria for diagnosis and basic clinical descriptions.

The case histories are brief, generally only three or four lines long, followed by as many pages of comment. This format can be very instructive—when a case is presented at a hospital grand round, for example. Inevitably the comment from an author when writing without the benefit of live discussion is more restricted. In general, however, most comments are clear, succinct, and informative, and the contributors make good use of the space allocated to them.

Most chapters deal with a single clinical entity, such as psoriasis, herpes, or keratoacanthoma. Others take an important physical sign, such as mouth ulcers, and discuss the various possible causes. It is interesting to see how large subjects are dealt with in a limited space. For example contact dermatitis is covered by discussing only eyelid and periorbital dermatitis based on the author’s study of 25 cases. By limiting discussion to one specific type of dermatitis the principles of diagnosis and treatment are elucidated clearly, and it is then up to the reader to apply them to other situations. This is preferable to merely providing lists of causes, as occurs in a few of the contributions. There is a list of no less than 63 associations with paronychia, most of which could simply be summed up as “trauma”.

Some treatments suggested are controversial or not generally accepted (such as the use of corticosteroids by mouth for hirsutism) but in general the options for managing each condition are sound and well presented.

It is always difficult to allocate the appropriate amount of space between rare and common conditions. On the whole the authors and editor succeed well, although I wonder why the same amount of space is given to epidermolysis bullosa (which is encountered rarely) as Raynaud’s phenomenon (which is much more common). None the less it provides a useful discussion of clinical features and of treatment once the diagnosis has been established.

This is an interesting and useful book that has clearly received a great deal of thought and time. For genitourinary doctors it is a book that is more likely to be consulted in the library than read at home.

P K Buxton
AIDS pathogenesis and treatment

R P Brettle

*Genitourin Med* 1989 65: 203-204
doi: 10.1136/sti.65.3.203-b

Updated information and services can be found at:
http://sti.bmj.com/content/65/3/203.3.citation

**Email alerting service**
Receive free email alerts when new articles cite this article. Sign up in the box at the top right corner of the online article.

Notes

To request permissions go to:
http://group.bmj.com/group/rights-licensing/permissions

To order reprints go to:
http://journals.bmj.com/cgi/reprintform

To subscribe to BMJ go to:
http://group.bmj.com/subscribe/