Book review

Clinical gynaecology. K Bhasuer Rao and N N Roy Chowdhury, eds, 1984. Orient Longman, Bombay, India pp 359. Price £10.25.

This short paperbacked textbook of gynaecology is written by a number of Indian authors under the editorship of K Bhasuer Rao and N N Roy Chowdhury. It is aimed mainly at undergraduates and house officers, and the general text is laid out in easily understandable form with many simple line drawings. Some of the photographs of clinical syndromes and gynaecological pathology are potentially good but have unfortunately not transferred very clearly to the printed page. It is a pity that some colour plates of this material were not included, but this would obviously have greatly increased the price of the book and put it outwith the reach of its intended readers.

The introductory chapters deal simply and adequately with the anatomy and physiology of the female genital tract. Correct emphasis is placed on adequate history taking and physical examination. A brief outline is given of the various diagnostic procedures in common use, including laparoscopy and colposcopy. The embryology of the genital tract is discussed, and the chapter on common paediatric and adolescent gynaecological problems follows on naturally from this.

The chapter on pelvic inflammatory disease includes a section on sexually transmitted diseases. Unfortunately, the information given is not up to date. As well as being misleading, it is in many places

completely inaccurate and gives erroneous information. For example, it is useless to try to treat infection with a penicillinase producing strain of *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* by increasing the dose of penicillin. Treatment of genital herpes by photoinactivation using neutral red dye is no longer recommended and, although the chapter mentions treatment with acyclovir, there is no mention of the use of oral acyclovir, which quite noticeably reduces the length of viral shedding in primary infections. Included in this section is tuberculosis of the genital tract, which, although now more of a rarity in Western countries, is obviously still an important cause of infertility in India.

Subsequent chapters deal with disorders of menstruation, hormones in gynaecology, infertility, fertility control, and ectopic gestation. The chapter dealing with injuries of the female genital tract contains a step by step description of the operative repair of a complete perineal tear, which can be equally as well applied to rectovaginal fistulae. Then follows genital prolapse and inversion of the uterus, the latter a rare but rather terrifying condition when it complicates childbirth. Prolapse and its repair is adequately dealt with, as is uterine pathology, the chapters on which include common conditions likely to be encountered by the gynaecologist, such as fibroids and endometriosis.

I found the chapter on cervical intra-epithelial neoplasia (CIN) and carcinoma of the cervix a little confusing in places. For example, special tests to detect early cancer of the cervix are discussed under carcinoma of the cervix, whereas one would have

expected to encounter this when dealing with CIN itself. Perhaps a little more discussion could have been given to colposcopic examination of the cervix as this has now completely altered the management of the abnormal cervical smear and early non-invasive disease of the cervix. Although the possible role of herpes simplex virus type 2 (HSV2) in the aetiology of CIN is considered, no mention is made of human papilloma virus, which has recently received attention as a possible aetiological factor.

The remaining chapters deal with malignancy of the uterine body and fallopian tubes and radiotherapy and chemotherapy in gynaecological cancer, and there are brief sections dealing with the problems of pain in gynaecology and psychosomatic disorders.

The last chapter deals with gynaecological surgery and outlines in detail preoperative and postoperative care. Included is a detailed description of a number of gynaecological operations including the choice of suture material. Perhaps there was too much detail in this section—certainly much more than one would expect in such a book.

The appendices contain diagrams of the various positions used in gynaecological examinations and surgery, and also photographs of a number of commonly used instruments. Finally, a short glossary explains the derivation and meaning of much gynaecological terminology, and includes mention of a number of eminent medical people whose names are synonymous with a variety of operations and instruments.

S S R Bain