Book review

Sexually Transmitted Diseases. By C. B. S. SCHOFIELD. 1972. Pp 256, 12 figs. Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh (£1.25)

The appearance of yet another text-book on the sexually transmitted diseases presumably reflects a need. Obviously any newcomer to this field will inevitably be compared with existing texts on such points as content, scope, detail, and price. This book does well on all counts.

The author has managed to approach his subject in an original fashion which owes little to previous texts and he has avoided the repetition of dogma. He writes clearly and remarkably fully for such a relatively small book on the major venereal diseases and their complications. The sections on treatment are particularly good throughout, being thoughtfully written with all aspects of the patient's care being considered. Especially commendable is the attention given to Public Health and medico-social management and the sociological and psychological background to the sexually transmitted diseases.

Full and up-to-date accounts are given of non-specific genital infections, trichomoniasis, genital candidiasis, and the minor sexually transmitted infections. Further evidence of the book's practical approach is the amount of space devoted to 'Other Conditions of the Genitalia'. Virtually every common disorder and a number of rare ones are dealt with.

Attention is paid to the realities of modern travel with accounts of tropical sexually transmitted diseases, of tropical treponematoses, and of other diseases met with in the tropics which may affect the genitals. A useful point is the inclusion at the end of each chapter of a well chosen short list of references for further reading.

Though the standard of accuracy throughout is high, inevitably there are some errors. On page 92, dealing with aneurysm of the aortic arch, it is stated that 'Brachial neuralgia can be caused by pressure on the intercostal nerves'. In the section on tabes, acute prostatitis is given as a possible differential diagnosis of an atonic bladder (page 105). The statement that genital candidiasis in men is 'always sexually transmitted' (page 160) would be disputed by many. The speculation that "Reiter's disease is one of a spectrum of diseases including rheumatoid arthritis on the one hand and psoriasis on the other" (page 179) is imprecise and could lead the student to conclude that rheumatoid arthritis and Reiter's disease were, in some way, connected. Keratitic precipitates (K.P.) are not 'keratin particles' (page 182) but collections of inflammatory cells.

These, however, are relatively minor points. The general standard of the book is a high one. It is well printed and bound and represents quite extraordinary value for money. It will surely meet with a much deserved success.

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