

Book reviews

Venereal Diseases and Their Avoidance. By R. N. RICHARDS. 1974. Pp. 187, 53 figs, glossary, index. Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, New Jersey, U.S.A. (£2.60)

The author's aim, to present information about venereal and other sexually-transmitted diseases in as detailed a way as one may find in medical textbooks but in language understandable to the laity, is fulfilled.

Thus Part I of the text embodies sixteen clinical topics and covers all the conditions commonly seen in special clinics. Part 2 deals with questions of transmission of infection and the factors to be considered in the spread and avoidance of infection. The four remaining parts are headed: medical, social, and public health aspects; reproductive anatomy and a glossary of terms; statistical tables; and treatment schedules. The scope of the book is therefore thoroughly comprehensive. The illustrations, in black and white, are well chosen.

One of the special features of the clinical section is that each condition is accompanied by reports of typical case histories; these are followed by a section headed 'Problem', giving the reader an opportunity to test how much of his reading has been understood. In this way the book becomes an education tool. Advanced students will find the reference lists to each chapter useful, and the approach is therefore more towards the adult than the adolescent. Medical students, young nurses, and social workers and also their teachers should find the book useful.

One could, of course, dispute details. For example, the definition of the incubation period of gonorrhoea would be better presented as the time from exposure to detectable disease, whether this is symptom-free or not (p. 21). There is talk of "anal area" infection and an illustration of a swab in the anal canal, when it should be made clear that the condition under consideration is proctitis and that specimens are best taken from the rectum using a proctoscope (p. 24). The introductory paragraph covering blood tests for syphilis could be clearer (p. 45). At the level of presentation one would have expected mention of the need to test the urine for sugar in all cases of balanitis (p. 99).

The part dealing with avoidance of infection offers nothing new, but it is comprehensive in so far as it presents the hazards of casual exposure in terms of groups 'at risk', and it advocates the use of the condom forthrightly. Early attendance when doubt arises is encouraged, and what patients may expect by way of consultation, examination, investigation, treatment, and contact interview is clearly set out.

It is not difficult to find minor faults, but the approach to the subject, being both frank and refreshing, is very welcome. No clinic should be without a copy.

R. S. Morton

Year Book of Dermatology, 1974.

Edited by F. D. MALKINSON and R. W. PEARSON. 1974. Pp. 446, 50 figs. Year Book Publishers Inc., Chicago (distributed in the United Kingdom by Lloyd-Luke (Medical Books) London). (£10.75)

The latest edition of this familiar work again edited by the two Professors of the Rush Medical College, with its 446 compressed pages and 50 black and white mainly histological illustrations, is as attractively produced and as easily handled as its predecessors.

As formerly, however, the sexually-transmitted diseases are ill served. The chapter on Venereal Diseases fills but 10½ pages and although there are 27 references (no less than nineteen of which are from the *British Journal of Venereal Diseases*) all but eleven (nine referring to syphilis and two to gonorrhoea) are by title only. In other sections Reiter's disease and HL-A 27 antigen earn a page, two papers are included on penicillin reactions (one describing local ischaemia and paralysis following an intragluteal injection of benzathine penicillin into a one-year-old baby), and three concerned with herpes virus which are of direct or tangential interest. Otherwise there are no direct references whatever to chancroid, granuloma inguinale, lymphogranuloma venereum, non-gonococcal urethritis (including *Chlamydia* or mycoplasmas), vaginal candidiasis, trichomoniasis, genital warts, molluscum contagiosum, or pediculosis pubis, and the only one to scabies concerns scabies in babies.

The book also lacks the usual excellent introductory review article which has been such a worthwhile feature of earlier years. It is therefore not recommended to venereologists. Those who read this journal will receive little or no additional benefit and those who desire information in a single volume can much more profitably and slightly more cheaply obtain the new "Recent Advances in the Sexually-Transmitted Diseases" (1975) edited by R. S. Morton and J. R. W. Harris and published by Churchill, Livingstone, Edinburgh.

However, in a great many countries, the sexually-transmitted diseases are managed by dermato-venereologists and this is an excellent reference work containing much of interest to reinforce the other half (or three-quarters or more) of their practice as is evident from its continuing popularity. For example, white wrinkled nicotine addicts, who themselves, together with wrinkled abstainers, have usually blamed their lines on exposure to actinic rays, will be relieved to learn that the possible association of crow's feet around the eyes with cigarette smoking has been challenged. They may remain confused, however, by the summary statement of biopsy findings, "Elastosis in wrinkled smokers with less sun exposure was greater than expected and was not significantly different from that of either the wrinkled non-smokers or the non-wrinkled non-smokers". *R. R. Willcox*