

British Journal of Venereal Diseases

Edited for the Medical Society for the Study of Venereal Diseases

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VOLUME 57, 1981

BRITISH MEDICAL ASSOCIATION
TAVISTOCK SQUARE, LONDON WC1H 9JR

Book reviews

Clinical Practice in Sexually Transmissible Diseases. By D H H Robertson, A McMillan, and H Young, 1980. Pitman Medical, London. Pp 458. Price £27.

The authors have written an excellent and comprehensive textbook which all physicians specialising in genitourinary medicine will want to read and which teachers should encourage undergraduates to dip into. They have taken a modern approach to the sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), evident in their outstanding opening chapter, general layout, and content of the book.

The first chapter examines the social changes, trends in STDs, and ways of controlling them in an open, wide-ranging, and sympathetic manner. The philosophical approach used in this chapter represents the best of clear, well-rounded, and benevolent Scottish clinical thinking; it reads with a Scottish accent. The layout of the book has allowed for space to be given to the newer STDs, such as hepatitis, and examines some of the complications not traditionally covered in depth in such textbooks, such as pelvic inflammatory disease and carcinoma of the cervix. While welcoming inclusion of these newer diseases it seems a pity that whole chapters (albeit short) have been devoted to infectious mononucleosis and Marburg disease and that far too much space has been devoted to syphilis (just over 20%). Textbooks and lectures should be designed to give a balanced view of the specialty. It is no longer realistic to spend a great deal of time and space on late syphilis in particular. This is only a minor criticism of what is a major new textbook on the STDs. Its other attractions are the sound clinical sense manifest in the approaches to different diseases always backed up by appropriate scientific fact. The application of numbered text references is extremely useful.

One can only feel sorry for the authors that the publishers have put such a prohibitive price on this book. A paperback edition without expensive colour plates might well reach a wider readership.

M W Adler

Venereology in Practice. By N Hjorth, H Schmidt, and H I Maibach, 1979. Year Book Medical Publishers Inc, Chicago and London. Pp 108, 40 colour illustrations. Price £9.95.

This book, which was originally published in Danish, is intended for medical students and non-specialists. The text is brief but unfortunately there are several inaccurate statements.

The clinical features of syphilis are covered in four pages, readers being referred to larger texts for a description of tertiary syphilis. Even so, it is stated that tertiary symptoms do not occur before 10 years after infection and saddle nose is mentioned here rather than under congenital syphilis. It is misleading to say that the Herxheimer reaction can be prevented by giving steroids for one to two days before antibiotic therapy; they need to be continued during the initial phase of treatment. In the FTA-ABS test, the Reiter treponeme is not the antigen, which is the impression given on page 49. Antilipoidal antibodies can, and often do, cross the placenta and I am surprised to read (page 47) that the authors believe they do not.

There are 40 excellent colour illustrations, which presumably accounts for the high cost of this small book. However, apart from the question of cost, it is difficult to recommend this book with its present text. Although in places it contains some good advice, there are too many incorrect statements and the translation could certainly be improved.

P Rodin

Sumpf Fieber Medizin für schwule Männer. Autorengruppe schwule Medizinstudenten, 1978. Pp 94. Rosa Winkel Verlags und Versand GmbH, Berlin. Price DM 9.00.

This is a most pleasantly produced little booklet of some 94 pages produced by a group of gay medical students. These describe with characteristic Germanic thoroughness the anatomy of the male genital and anal systems, followed by an

introduction to personal hygiene, and an account of techniques of homosexual activity, including methods of stimulation with various artefacts. A detailed description, understandable to any intelligent person, of sexually transmitted diseases includes good sections on syphilis, gonorrhoea, non-specific urethritis, scabies, pediculosis pubis, herpes, and condylomata acuminata. This is followed by a section, which any venereologist with patients in this group would find useful, on hepatitis, localised disease of the anus, haemorrhoids, fissure, proctitis, and the enteric transmitted infections. Lastly, a useful section on some psychosexual problems concerned with sexual activity in homosexual men makes this altogether a most informative booklet.

Michael Waugh

Notice

Society of Social Health Workers in Venereology

The study conference for 1981 will be held in Plymouth from Thursday 2 April to Saturday 4 April 1981. The Conference will be held at the College of St Mark and St John, Derriford Road, Plymouth. Accommodation, lectures, and meals will be at the college. Those interested should contact T Roberts, Special Clinic, Plymouth General Hospital, Freedom Fields, Plymouth, Devon.