

Book reviews

Venereal diseases. 2nd edition. By VN Sehgal. (Pp 175; 45.00 rupees.) New Delhi: Jaypec Brothers, 1987.

As this book is written primarily for students in "developing and underdeveloped countries" the allocation of over a third of the text to syphilis is probably acceptable. Apart from the chapters on tropical sexually transmitted disease and an excellent description on the preparation of tissue smears for Donovan bodies, however, the remaining clinical chapters are poor. The dermatological manifestations of disseminated gonococcal infection are omitted, and I am sure very few clinicians routinely take prostatic smears and cultures to assess cure after treating gonorrhoea and non-specific urethritis as advocated. Professor Sehgal has included a new chapter on genital warts since the first edition, which renders the description of warts in the chapter entitled "Minor venereal diseases" redundant. Unfortunately, there is no mention of the relevance of DNA hybridisation in papillomavirus infection or the associations with neoplasia. Acyclovir is not described in the treatment of genital herpes, and there is no reference to

bacterial vaginosis. The chapter on the acquired immune deficiency syndrome is inaccurate, extremely outdated, and of limited value to the "developing" countries as the Western epidemiology is described with no reference to "slim disease".

The standard of publication is poor, with many printing errors and omissions, and the photographs are very indistinct and consequently of limited value. The book is priced realistically, however, and may be within the means of an interested student working in the Indian subcontinent.

RS Pattman

Life-threatening dermatoses. By Paul A Krusinski and F P Flowers. (No of pages and price not given.) Chicago: Year Book Medical Publishers, 1987.

Every dermatologist has been teased for alleged timidity and laziness in dealing only with patients who "never get better, never die, and never get you out at night". Here is the perfect answer—a book on life-threatening dermatoses. Maybe it has an element of hype—"As you first open this book you should feel a glow of excitement" gushes the foreword—but there is more here than simply being "savaged by a dead sheep". Some people do die of their skin diseases.

The 10 chapters cover a variety of topics; some come in neat packets (for example,

melanomas and collagen vascular disease), but others are less tidy (diffuse erythemas, erythematous nodules, and pustular dermatoses). For the latter group the authors make use of many algorithms as "road maps through the differential diagnoses". Some are helpful, others less so; but they compare well with the longer tables (table 9-1 is five pages long). I doubt, however, whether there is room in a book of only 300 pages for 24 on theoretical aspects of algorithms and on the principles of clinical decision making, written by an expert in computerised logic systems.

That chapter apart, the book is clinically based, sound, and in the main clearly written. The 35 colour plates, which are just bigger than most postage stamps, are of average quality, as are the black and white pictures.

My copy would not have stood up to many knocks in a busy clinic. It shed four pages within four minutes of being opened. The book does, however, take on a difficult subject in a novel way. It is to be commended for this, and may deserve a place on the bookshelves of accident and emergency departments. It would probably be used less often in a department of genitourinary medicine.

JA Savin