

Books

Management of Gastrointestinal Cancer*

Edited by Peter McCulloch & Andrew Kingsnorth. Pp. xvi + 404. Illustrated. £78. London: BMJ. 1996.
ISBN 0-7279-1071-X.

This excellent book is a welcome addition to the books on gastrointestinal cancer currently available. There is a strong Japanese contribution particularly in the surgical field, where their more aggressive surgical techniques appear to achieve improved results over the more conservative European techniques, particularly in cancers such as the stomach and pancreas, both of which occur as high incidence cancers in Japan.

This book is refreshingly different from so many books on gastrointestinal malignancies as it presents a multidisciplinary approach with each discipline contributing to the overall management decisions and strategies and as such will be welcomed by epidemiologists, surgeons, radiotherapists, oncologists, geneticists and molecular biologists. The excellent chapter on epidemiology has 160 references and the preventative side of cancer is emphasised if the aetiological factors can be established. The temporal trends in the incidence and mortality of the various cancers of the gastrointestinal tract are also reviewed. Chapters on carcinogenesis and molecular biology reflect the current thoughts and knowledge on these topics with possible future developments in new treatment strategies.

* Book titles marked may be ordered directly from
MASA Multimedia, Book Department, Private Bag
X1, Pinelands, 7430, tel. (021) 531-3081, fax (021)
531-4126, e-mail masact@iafrica.com



Two good chapters on oesophageal carcinoma discuss new modalities such as intraluminal ultrasound and brachytherapy in the investigation and treatment of this dismal disease. Carcinoma of the stomach and pancreas are well covered, particularly from the varying surgical technique aspect as neither of these cancers are particularly chemo or radiation sensitive so there is little to offer in the palliative setting.

The chapters on colorectal cancer are up to date and include the current thoughts on the genetic factors involved as well as the molecular genetics in these cancers. Screening tests are critically discussed and so are the various staging systems used. Surgical techniques are mentioned including the radical excision and the more local excision and the indications for each are discussed. Ongoing trials in the UK such as Axis and QUASAR are mentioned with obvious further recruitment in mind! There is also a chapter on lymphomas of the gastro-intestinal tract and their management.

This book is well written, comprehensive and gives an excellent overview of cancers of the gastrointestinal tract. It should be readily available to all registrars and specialists involved in their management and will be a useful practical reference book on any doctor's or library bookshelf.

C Geddes

Current Research in Magnesium

Edited by M J Halpern and J Durlach. Pp. xv + 378. Illustrated. £60/US\$110. London: John Libbey. 1996. ISBN 0-86196-550-7.

After potassium, magnesium is the most abundant intracellular cation. Inside cells it is about four times more abundant than calcium. It acts as a cofactor for, and possible regulator of, many cellular processes, including a number of key events in transmembrane signal transduction. It also plays a role in the release of calcium from the sarcoplasmic reticulum, and its subsequent binding to troponin during muscular contraction. Yet it receives almost no mention in the standard physiology and biochemistry textbooks, other than that it binds to ATP (essentially 'completing' the structure of this molecule), and is the cation (in the place of Fe⁺⁺) in the 'haem' of chlorophyll.

This 378 page booklet, which constitutes the Proceedings of the VII International Magnesium Symposium dispels the Cinderella status of magnesium. It contains 85 papers, arranged in 18 sections, covering chiefly analytical techniques, and the epidemiological and clinical importance of this ion. There are relatively few papers on the physiological role of magnesium, which remains tantalizingly elusive.

Being the proceedings of a symposium, the information contained in the book has an inevitable staccato character. This is made worse by the somewhat non-uniform editing of the papers, some of which contain extensive, informative summaries, while others lack summaries altogether. The papers also vary from mini-reviews to preliminary reports. But the overall organization of the book is excellent,

particularly the way the papers with common themes are grouped into Sections. For anyone involved in, particularly, Cardiovascular, Obstetric, Psychiatric and Sports Medicine this is probably a very important book to take note of. Magnesium is going to be very big in the not too distant future.

Johan H Koeslag

Heart disease in Pregnancy*

Edited by Celia Oakley. Pp. xxxi + 439. Illustrated. £73. 1997. London: BMJ. ISBN 0-7279-1065-5.

Professor Celia Oakley has, together with a strong team of co-authors from the United Kingdom, produced an excellent book on cardiac disease in pregnancy. The text and style allow for comfortable reading. The book is quite sturdy and is meant as a reference text, not a pocket format book.

Approximately one half of the book deals with congenital and acquired heart disease in pregnancy and discusses pathophysiology, diagnostic aspects and management, the latter in extensive detail. In the remainder of the book several chapters deal with related problems of rhythm disorders, thrombo-embolic disease, counselling, cardiovascular medication, pre-eclampsia, anaesthesia and contraception. This last topic is frequently overlooked by the non-obstetrician part of the care team and is regarded as an essential end to the book. The extensive list of references at the end of each chapter includes classical papers and recent references till 1995.

Pregnant patients with cardiovascular diseases frequently require complex team management. This text is a most welcome addition to specialist texts covering medical disorders in pregnancy, and is very likely to be the standard reference. It is essential reading for obstetricians, physicians and cardiologists managing pregnant patients, including registrars in training. It is also highly recommended for medical libraries.

B G Lindeque

Books received

The receipt of these books is acknowledged, and this listing must be regarded as sufficient return for the courtesy of the sender. Books that appear to be of particular interest will be reviewed as space permits. The SAMJ does not publish unsolicited reviews.

HLA and Disease - the Molecular Basis. Edited by Arne Svejgaard, Soren Buus and Lars Fugger. Pp. 440. Illustrated. DKK400 (ex VAT). 1997. Copenhagen: Munsgaard. ISBN 87-16-11942-8.

How to Read a Paper. The Basics of Evidence Based Medicine.* By Trisha Greenhalgh. Pp. xvii + 196. £17. 1997. London: BMJ. ISBN 0-7279-1139-2.

Imaging Drug Reactions and Toxic Hazards. Third Edition. Edited by George Ansell. Pp. 378. Illustrated. £90. 1997. London: Chapman & Hall Medical. ISBN 0-412-55590-5.

Ask the Doctor. Hypertension. By Vincent Friedewald. Pp. xiv + 120. R59.95. Kansas City: Andrews and McMeel. ISBN 0-8362-7022-3.