

Book reviews

ABC of Rheumatology. Edited by Michael L Snaith. BMJ Publishing Group, London, 1996. 90pp. £14.95.

National health insurance certificates of illness in the United Kingdom indicate that rheumatic diseases are the commonest cause of absence from work. This story is repeated throughout the developing world. Moreover, in older age, these diseases remain the greatest cause of morbidity. Most members of the medical and para-medical staff will have to deal with such complaints, whether they are the primary cause of disability or co-diseases which prolong the recovery period of patients. A warm welcome then, to this soft covered, short, beautifully produced book, which summarises the commonest rheumatic diseases.

Its twenty chapters are written by different specialists, including nurse practitioners, podiatrists, physiotherapists and occupational therapists. Most originated as articles in the *British Medical Journal*, but have been modified in the light of correspondence and comments (hostile and laudatory). The publisher has a significant advantage over others in this respect. How many authors and speakers have wished they could retrieve their words and express themselves differently!

The first five chapters cover regionally based problems, pain in the hand and wrist, pain in the neck, shoulders and arm, low back pain, pain in the hip and knee, and pain in the foot. The next twelve chapters deal with the commonest rheumatic diseases, starting with fibromyalgia syndrome, progressing through osteoporosis and concluding with rashes and vasculitis. Osteoarthritis, gout,

rheumatoid arthritis (two chapters), spondylitis, childhood arthritis, polymyalgia rheumatica, systemic sclerosis, and Raynaud's phenomenon are all adequately covered. The concluding chapters are more general, yet of great importance, dealing with laboratory tests, the team approach, and the epidemiology of rheumatic diseases.

No chapter exceeds six pages (what a relief!). This is a state of the art publication with spacious text, beautiful colour pictures, well-produced X-rays and boxed summaries for those whose busy schedule does not allow in-depth reading.

Forming the 21st of the ABC series from the British Medical Journal Publishing Group, it illustrates that rheumatology has come of age. The book is an ideal reference for all general practice and hospital staff who deal with patients suffering from rheumatic problems. The consultant physician who wishes to keep up with today's practice in a speciality which is not his own will welcome this addition to his personal library.

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Chronic Complications of Diabetes. Edited by J C Pickup and G Williams. Blackwell Science, Oxford, 1994. 313pp. £49.50.

All healthcare professionals involved in the supervision and management of patients with diabetes must have a solid knowledge of the possible complications. Patients wish to know the natural history of diabetes and the risk of developing complications. Further-

more, from a medical point of view, we have to be sufficiently well informed to direct management towards preventing and treating these complications. A text dealing with the subject is therefore a welcome addition to the literature.

This is a book of modest size with each chapter giving a concise account of the subject. The result is a short text comprising the known and accepted facts with little in the way of speculation or description of experimental work. Within many chapters, however, a short section is given over to recent developments to cover more controversial aspects. Contributors are largely drawn from experts in the field in the UK.

Since most of the complications of diabetes are vascular in origin the bulk of the text is given over to this area. The first four chapters describe the basic science of microvascular complications in general. Published in 1994, this account runs the risk of becoming quickly dated, but the authors have sensibly chosen established principles to avoid this and maintain the relevance of the text. Subsequently, the book is divided into sections, each of which deals with a clinical topic, following a basic formula of pathophysiology, epidemiology and basic clinical aspects. The section on retinopathy is strong on pathophysiology, has a good section on principles of treatment and is very well illustrated with both colour and black and white photographs. There is also an account of the practical aspects of visual handicap with particular emphasis on management of insulin treatment and blood glucose monitoring. The next section deals with neuropathology, opening with an account of the epidemiology and pathogenesis, moving on to a description of the clinical aspects of both peripheral and autonomic neuropathy, each covered in a separate chapter. The account of microvascular complications is completed with the section on nephropathy, following the same formula of description of the