

ABC of Asthma (4th edn)

John Rees, Dipak Kanabar
BMJ Publishing Group 1999
Price £14.95. Pp 66
ISBN 0 7279 1261 5

The fourth edition of this popular slim volume seeks to provide a practical, general view of asthma. It achieves this in a comprehensive manner for both adult and paediatric asthma.

The book is easy to follow and certainly will be useful to, as the blurb says: 'GPs, medical students, nurses and anyone dealing with the treatment of asthma in both adults and children'.

The format is such that individual chapters can be read as stand-alone monographs. Although this is advantageous if one wants a quick update on a specific area, there is a large amount of reduplication between chapters. Inevitably this is seen when comparing the adult and children's sections, although one might reasonably expect most readers to focus on one or other section, rather than both.

This edition incorporates updated information on the leukotriene receptor antagonists as well as long-acting β_2 agonists. A balanced view is provided on the pros and cons of these drugs, as well as the current vogue for fixed-dose preparations of inhaled steroids with long-acting β_2 agonists.

The accent of the book is very much on providing practical information. This is most successful in the sections that cover precipitants and patterns of illness and diagnosis of asthma in adults and children. The section covering which patients should receive particular encouragement to record peak flows is helpful. The paediatric chapter on drug treatment contains a lot of useful information on different inhaler devices. This is a different approach to that employed in the adult chapter which covers the subject in a rather more generic way.

A wealth of information is provided within the text and sometimes the structure of this can be rather confusing. For example, it might have been more sensible to have used specific sub-headings for each drug, e.g. dosage, method of delivery, compliance, rather than mentioning some of

these in relation to some drugs but not to others. The labelling of certain diagrams is also rather poor. It would have been simpler to have referred to them in the text as Figure 1, 2, rather than merely placing them alongside not always relevant text. The graph relating to the FACET data on p. 37 uses the same line type for different sets of data. This is confusing!

One unintentionally humorous moment in the text arises on p. 13, when a typographical error converts the word 'improvement' to 'impairment' and thus the sentence reads 'the degree of impairment in lung function on starting inhaled steroids is greatest in those with the shortest history of symptoms'. I am sure this will be altered in the inevitable subsequent editions that will be produced of this useful book.

MCI Lipman, Royal Free Hospital, London

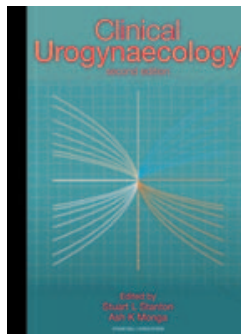
Clinical Urogynaecology (2nd edn)

Edited by Stuart L Stanton,
Ash K Monga
Churchill Livingstone 1999
Price £129.00. Pp 741
ISBN 0 4430 3949

The second edition of this book might have taken several years to materialize but it has been worth the wait.

This is probably the most comprehensive text on urogynaecology written so far. It is divided into 6 sections to include evidence-based reviews on basic science, investigations, clinical conditions, pregnancy and urinary tract dysfunction, treatments and practice.

There is something for everyone, with subjects ranging from urogynaecology in developing countries to organization of continence services, training and audit. These are to be welcomed as are other new chapters on clinical neurophysiology and anorectal dysfunction, along with some of the



newer therapies for detrusor instability and hyperreflexia, such as neuromodulation. There is also an excellent chapter on prolapse which will be essential reading. All reviews are evidence-based and well written by authors from 17 different disciplines.

The International Continence Society standardization reports are included in the appendices and are important for uniformity of investigation, diagnosis and outcome measures. It is debatable whether the recommendations of the Urodynamics Society are also necessary.

The only criticism is of some repetition but, that apart, the information contained is essential for all who manage women with lower urinary tract and pelvic floor dysfunction. At a time when clinical governance and revalidation are receiving such high priority, interested clinicians should be conversant with all aspects of urogynaecology. This book will go a long way to achieving that aim.

RM Freeman, Derriford Hospital, Plymouth

Clinical Approach to Antiphospholipid Antibodies

Stephen R Levine, Robin L Brey
Butterworth Heinemann 2000
Price £55.00. Pp 147
ISBN 0 7506 7177 7

This is a short multi-author monograph dealing with the clinical approach to patients with antiphospholipid antibodies. It is primarily aimed at practising neurologists. The text first covers the epidemiology and pathophysiological properties of antiphospholipid antibodies and how they can potentially cause both venous thromboembolism and arterial thrombosis, particularly with respect to their influence upon the normal haemostatic pathways and the normal protective control mechanisms.

The authors clearly put into perspective the background of antiphospholipid positivity in the normal population and the significance of the various antiphospholipid antibodies particularly a positive lupus anticoagulant test, anticardiolipin antibodies and anti- β_2 glycoprotein I antibodies in the pathogenic process of the development of thrombosis.

There then follows a very clear clinical description of how these antibodies may be associated with cerebral vascular thrombotic disease, the obstetric complications of recurrent miscarriage and intrauterine growth restriction.

Finally there is a detailed chapter of the clinical management of patients who have developed specific thrombotic manifestations, including the use of heparin, long-term anticoagulant therapy with warfarin, the desired therapeutic range and also the use of antiplatelet agents and other potential antithrombotic compounds and disease-modifying approaches. As most of these indications have not been clearly defined by prospective clinical trials there is also a final section of 8 brief clinical case reports highlighting specific diagnostic and management situations.

Overall the book is easy to read and provides a clear cut approach to diagnosis and management of the antiphospholipid syndrome, particularly dealing with various neurological thrombotic manifestations and obstetric complications.

The book is written largely by North American authors and tends to reflect that readership, despite the fact that the majority of the clinical descriptions and research have been performed in Western Europe. However, the book gives a very clear perspective of up-to-date information on the pathophysiology, diagnosis and management of this syndrome and highlights the rapidly evolving knowledge and literature in this area.

This brief monograph is a very useful review for the general physician, neurologist or obstetrician interested in how antiphospholipid antibodies maybe encountered in daily clinical practice. As such this book contains invaluable advice for the practising clinician and will serve as a useful update text. However, it does not focus in sufficient detail on the haematologi-

cal, rheumatological or immunological issues of these antibodies, particularly from the point of view of basic clinical research investigators.

Samuel J Machin, UCL Hospitals

Normal Values in Pregnancy (2nd edn)

Edited by MM Ramsay, DK James, PJ Steer, CP Weiner, B Gonik
WB Saunders 2000

Price £22.95. Pp 160

ISBN 0 7020 2527 5

This is what every obstetrician wants. This book brings together all the essential measurements needed by the clinician to determine what constitutes normal ranges and values throughout pregnancy. The book is neatly divided into maternal and fetal levels and the parameters measured within labour. It defines normal values for all variables within the fetal and maternal compartments.

It will be extremely valuable to those trainees who wish to have ready access to normal values. Each parameter also contains a critical comment by the authors, which provides a balanced view of any confounding variables which affect measurement during pregnancy.

Roy G Farquharson, Liverpool Women's Hospital

The Transplant Patient

Edited by Paula Trzepacz, Andrea Dimartini

Cambridge University Press 2000

Price £40.00. Pp 311

ISBN 0 521 55354 7

In their preface the authors conclude by saying that this book 'is essential reading for all involved in organ transplantation'. The authors, a neuroscientist and a psychiatrist, have produced a 300-page volume that explores the psychosocial, psychiatric and ethical issues in organ transplantation. These are subjects that are often not given enough attention and to that extent they are to be applauded. Like many

such books from the United States it ignores most of the work done in other parts of the world.

Psychosocial screening of potential transplant recipients is a difficult area and a chapter is devoted to the impact of non-compliance, smoking and substance abuse. The authors conclude that there is a very real danger of discriminating against patients in lower socioeconomic classes.

Living related transplantation is an expanding area in many transplant programmes and has been given fresh impetus by the acute shortage of donor organs. Chapter 3 is an excellent overview of this topic and discusses the monetary and psychological cost to the donor.

Chapter 4 reviews studies of quality of life (QOL) in transplant recipients and their families and is a valuable reference source for those working in this field. One of the important conclusions is that although QOL is improved in most recipients it is not the same as in healthy populations. A review of QOL in patients over 64 years of age concludes that the improvement seen is similar to that in a younger population despite worse survival in the 'elderly'. There is, however, a paucity of data in this field.

The chapter on paediatric transplantation and the chapters on cognitive assessment, psychopharmacology and psychoneuroimmunology are aimed at the psychiatrist or the psychologist rather than a wider audience.

Dr Starzl's introductory chapter, a ramble through the history of transplantation, and the concluding chapter on new developments in transplantation do not sit easily with the rest of the book.

While this book is a useful introduction to psychosocial and ethical issues in organ transplantation it is far from the 'essential read' that the authors claim.

Jayan Parameshwar, Papworth Hospital