

devoted to cancer of the exocrine pancreas, is number 12. Other chapters summarise the already oft reviewed 'clinical' and 'therapeutic' aspects of pancreatic cancer, although the state-of-the-art in these matters is reflected by the references, many of which relate to papers published in the 1970's and early 1980's.

Eight chapters illustrate 'Basic research'. The three devoted to experimental cancer in animals, by Longnecker, Pour, and Kyriazis are, as is to be expected, professional, excellent and up-to-date. Similarly, the chapter on carbohydrate antigens is good. On the other hand, the relationship between oncogenes and pancreatic cancer is too difficult to define in a few pages and specific relationship between oncogenes and pancreatic cancer is even more poorly defined than is the case with other alimentary cancers. The chapter on the pathology of pancreatic cancer is really wholly unsatisfactory, as it does not deal with the many recent studies which have so illuminated the pathogenesis of pancreatic cancer and even the information which is presented about diagnostic methods is incomplete.

The eight chapters of the second section of the book are devoted to aspects of 'Clinical research'. A brief summary of the general epidemiology of pancreatic cancer is followed by a study of the epidemiology in a province of France, which updates by a couple of years two previous studies from the same area (studies which are not quoted). A chapter on tumour markers is valuable, comprehensive, and critical, with references up to 1985. Similarly, the radiological and scanning techniques used for the diagnosis of pancreatic cancer are satisfactorily summarised, with an up-to-date chapter on endoscopic sonography of pancreatic cancer.

The final section of seven chapters deals with the treatment of pancreatic cancer and is depressing, as usual. Chemotherapy is usefully reviewed with emphasis on the role of epirubicin. As is mentioned, however, the chemotherapy of pancreatic cancer has had no impact on survival. There is also a brief summary of the surgery of pancreatic cancer although only 26 of the 57 quoted reports relate to papers published since 1980. Two further chapters represent a further plea for radical resection of the pancreatic cancer, with a current mortality of 12.5% and five year survival of 28% in a group of 41 French patients. A chapter on the management of the pain of preterminal pancreatic cancer does not mention nerve blocks, etc.

The book ends with a review by the editor of 'Future prospects' – a chapter which well illustrates the dictum that 'it is difficult to predict, especially the future'. For some reason which is not clear, there is repetition of some of the 'oncogene hypoth-

esis' which (understandably) seems to exert a mesmeric influence on current thinking about cancer although, as has been suggested previously, the relationship between oncogenes and human cancer is, at best, guilt by association. As for the relationship to pancreatic cancer, there is not any, yet. Many other high sounding concepts are briefly mentioned but don't help with our understanding of pancreatic cancer. There follows a list of 'future goals' (We must fight defeatism; we must support basic biological science; we must increase ultrasonographic and endoscopic expertise; we must have more epidemiological studies; and so on) – all of which are laudable; none is substantiated; and none of which have, so far, helped our understanding of the pathogenesis, permitted early diagnosis; or improved treatment of pancreatic cancer. I wonder whether it will be any different in 10 years time?

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Peptic ulcer and its drug causations. The role of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs Edited by D Clinch (Pp. 165; illustrated; £19.95) London: Croom Helm, 1986.

The title of this book is misleading because half is taken up by a discussion of general aetiology and treatment. This first half is a straightforward conventional account. Better proof reading would have helped, thus burimamide, metiamide, etintidine and ranitidine are all misspelt on the same page. The account of treatment is rather limited and the illustrations are unclear. The discussion of the significance of individual results takes no account of the possibility of type II error, and the adverse effect patterns of cimetidine and ranitidine could have been more carefully distinguished.

The remaining 80 pages contain a general critique of methodology, accounts of individual drugs and descriptions of mechanisms. Views expressed are sometimes a little surprising, such as the suggestion that clinical trials provide the best sources of toxicity data. In addition the quotation numbers of reports to the Committee on Safety of Medicines for individual agents will lead inevitably to direct comparisons which will be completely misleading.

This book will fail to satisfy the expert because it does not deal with matters in sufficient depth. The general reader will find a clear well referenced account of some problems although often reaching a final sentence suggesting the need for more work but without saying what is in view.

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