

Books

The genetics and epidemiology of inflammatory bowel disease Edited by R McConnell, P Rozen, M Langman, and T Gilat. (Pp. 179; illustrated; £55.70.) Basel: Karger, 1986.

The reviewer must first declare insider dealing with the appointment of one of the editors to the Chair of Medicine in our University. A good book and a full time NHS contract encouraged me to continue.

This hard backed book of nearly 200 pages based on an international meeting held in Liverpool in 1983 is well illustrated with numerous Tables and Figures. The authors are largely drawn from the UK but there are also contributions from the USA, Holland, South America, and Israel. The book is divided into six sections (1) genetics; (2) epidemiology: (a) In defined geographical areas (b) clinical studies (c) time trends (d) ethnic, religious and occupational groups and (e) predisposing factors.

The first section opens with the distillation of a lifetime's work from Richard McConnell describing how genetic influences provide insight into the mechanism whereby environmental factors exert their effect. He provides strong evidence for a quantitative genetic relationship between the risk of developing either ulcerative colitis or Crohn's disease. This section includes a review by Richard Farmer of inflammatory bowel disease in families with an excellent summary of the literature and summary of his studies in a large series of patients from the Cleveland Clinic, USA. This section closes with a review of tissue antigens. The evidence suggests that HLA B8 is more frequent in granulomatous Crohn's disease and that HLA DR2 is more strongly associated with total ulcerative colitis than distal disease.

The epidemiology section opens with a good review from Drs Riis and Binder of the incidence, prevalence and prognosis of ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease in a population study from the County of Copenhagen. This section also includes useful data from Dr Anne Ferguson of the prevalence of inflammatory bowel disease in childhood based on a review from the whole of the United Kingdom.

The best contribution in the section concerned with time trends comes from Mendeloff on the incidence and prevalence of inflammatory bowel disease in whites and non-whites in Baltimore, USA.

The incidence and prevalence of inflammatory bowel disease among ethnic minorities is reported from several centres. These studies must be continued because the rate of change of incidence and prevalence in the new immigrants should provide important clues to the relevance of environmental factors.

The book closes with a review of other environmental factors in pathogenesis including breast feeding, sugar intake, dietary fibre, chemical factors and psychosomatic aspects.

This book is the best available guide to the genetics and epidemiology of inflammatory bowel disease.

ROBERT ALLAN

Guide to the ultrasound examination of the abdomen Edited by M L Skolnick. (Pp. 240; illustrated; DM128.) Heidelberg: Springer-Verlag, 1986.

Dr Skolnick has approached the practical problems of ultrasound diagnosis in an interesting way. His aim is to assist the ultrasound operator to carry out a properly organised and directed ultrasound examination. Each organ or organ system is given its own chapter. The normal appearances and scanning methods are initially described and then the differential diagnosis is established on the basis of the ultrasound features, with the emphasis on the important characteristics of each disease process.

Each chapter is well referenced up to 1985, although the emphasis is very much on the American literature with very little sign of the European or Japanese contribution.

Unfortunately the target audience of this book is unclear. The detail in each chapter is insufficient to assist the experienced radiologist or interested gastroenterologist but may be of some use to junior staff in training. Even here, the level of detailed approach would be insufficient for the Fellowship examination. I suspect the main target audience is the very large number of ultrasound technologists who carry out abdominal ultrasound in the United States. There, most of the reports are issued by the radiologist reporting purely from hard copy or video tape. It is obviously important under these circumstances that the examination is technically as complete as possible and here this book would be very useful.

This is an approach which has never found favour in Europe where the gastroenterologist or radiologist has performed abdominal ultrasound examinations himself, the whole diagnostic process being interactive with the acquisition of the scan data. In America, the European approach is finding favour and many more physicians and radiologists are now performing their own scans.

In Europe this book will only be of value to the ultrasound neophyte who is struggling to teach himself the basics of the technique. It will probably be a useful addition to the Radiology Department's library, but would be of little value to gastroenterologists and gastrointestinal radiologists.

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