the real conclusions of the study are rather different from those stated.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Infections of the gastrointestinal tract.


Yet another massive tome on infection, this time directed solely to the gastrointestinal tract! Ten parts, 97 chapters, 162 contributors – all but one from North America, and the weight is 3.8 kg.

The editors begin their preface (to a volume that they have endeavoured to make 'comprehensive and practical'); 'Gastrointestinal infections are one of the main causes of disease and death, particularly in the developing world'; absolutely true, but surprisingly only one of the contributors (from Peru) resides there! The goal of their labours is, they state, to provide 'a comprehensive overview that combines the scientific basis and the art of medicine relevant to enteric infections'; while also emphasising that '... the clinician who understands the new technologies ... becomes the master, not their slave'; they also write that '... there are many opportunities for simple, low-technology, low-cost approaches for dealing with this group of infections. To keep the text to reasonable length, an emphasis of interest (?) disease and focus, hepatic infections are not included and should, the reader is informed, '... be treated as a separate subject'. The intended readership consists of: '... the healthcare practitioner, the clinical investigator, and all who seek not only the latest clinical details but also an understanding of the breadth and limitations of our knowledge of enteric infections'.

Part I focuses on the history and epidemiological aspects (in both developed and developing countries) of diarrhoeal disease; not surprisingly there is a good deal on cholera, and also the impact of gastrointestinal infection on the course of malaria, and both well trodden paths (Anatomy, physiology, and immunology are covered in Parts II and III; normal flora, mucins, adherence factors, fluid and electrolyte transport, mucusal IgA, secretory IgA and IgM, enteric pathogens, cellular immune mechanisms, and immunomodulation of mast cells are some of the subjects tackled. In Parts IV to VI major clinical syndromes are considered – both in the immunocompetent and immunosuppressed subject; the coverage starts with food poisoning and travellers’ diarrhoea, and meanders along enteric fever, tropical sprue, appendicitis, diverticulitis, peritonitis, and infection of the inflammatory bowel disease; there is also a great deal on Helicobacter pylori (53 pages) and HIV infection. Microbiology, epidemiology, and pathophysiological considerations form the basis for Part VII, hepatitis, viral, and parasitic (protozoan and helminthic) infections are dealt with in this order. It is noteworthy that mycobacterial disease of the gastrointestinal tract (including Mycobacterium tuberculosis – which is arguably the world’s most common bacterial disease) is allocated 19 pages, whereas that on Whipple’s disease gets 18! Perhaps the editors should have taken more time with balance and priori-

ities! The protozoan sections are on the whole well done; Cyclospora cayatensis has just about made it! In a world context, helminthic infections (not least Schistosoma spp) are a dominant and important group; may be 168 pages represents rather short shrift! The remaining three parts focus on diagnosis (laboratory, endoscopic, and radiological), therapy, and preventive strategies – including vaccination (against viruses, bacteria, and parasites). A particularly useful chapter is one devoted to the treatment of paediatric diarrhoea. Although the various parts are clearly stated in the list of contents, there is no indication of this in the text itself.

One strength of this book lies in the substantial reference lists at the end of each chapter; most are appropriate and up to date, and (but not all) accurate. The line diagrams and half-tone photographs are of good quality; 44 colour plates are included; these range from histological, endoscopic, and parasitological figures. The index is comprehensive.

The intended audience of this book is, therefore, essentially that of an academic gastroenterologist, with an interest in infections. It is also of interest to all those whose clinical practice will not normally be in the developing world, and who are prepared to be, if not 'experts', at least informed, in the current literature on enteric infections.'

Drug-Induced Liver Disease.


Books exist describing untoward reactions of the liver to various drugs. The largest and most comprehensive is by H J Zimmerman (Hepatotoxicity: The Adverse Effects of Drugs and Other Chemicals on the Liver, New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1978) but it is sadly out of date. The book edited by B C Gough and P Stricker (Drug-Induced Liver Injury, 2nd edition; Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1992) is justifiably in wide use. However, the drugs scene, particularly in relation to hepatotoxicity, is changing rapidly and this book from Australia, edited by Geoffrey C. Farrell is both comprehensive and timely.

The first part describes underlying concepts of drug metabolism and hepatic reactions to drugs. The role of the liver in drug metabolism is contributed by Michael Murray and bio-chemical mechanisms by G C Farrell. Immunological mediation of drug reactions is discussed by Ian R Mackay, perhaps Australia’s most distinguished clinical immunologist. Pdela M Hall contributes an excellent chapter on histopathology, which includes 54 figures, many of them in colour.

Various drugs are discussed under the headings of metabolic factors, clinical features, hepatic-histology and course, outcome, and prevention. An up to date table covering 29 pages summarises the effects of each drug alphabetically. I could not find any omissions. Even ecstasy, a currently much discussed hepatotoxicity is annotated. This table, on floppy disc, is available free of charge on request by those who purchase the book.


