

Book Reviews

CARDIOVASCULAR SYSTEM (Clinical Film Viewing Series)

George G. Hartnell

Clinical Press, 1990, 164 pp. £15.00
ISBN 1 85457 012 9

As Professor Rhys Davies notes in his foreword to this excellent book, the back bone of medical teaching, be it the ward round or the tutorial, is the illustrated case. In this book Dr. Hartnell, who has trained in cardiology as well as in radiology, serves up 80 of these. Each begins with a short history and a few (though not too many) details; there is an illustration, usually a plain chest film though others are included such as a ventriculogram, an arch aortogram, a CT scan or an echo. Images obtained using newer techniques such as digital subtraction angiography and magnetic resonance imaging are included. Then come the questions: What does this show? What is the significance? What further investigations would you perform to reach a diagnosis? Over the page comes the answer — and much more. The abnormal features on the illustration are explained as are their significance. If there is more than one possible diagnosis each is discussed and further investigations considered.

Thus, each case tests the readers knowledge, and then teaches him some more. This makes the book doubly useful though clearly, some knowledge of the topic is required. This is therefore not the book for the clinical medical student, though he may want to dip into it prior to finals to refresh his memory of what the plain chest film in aortic dissection, mitral valve disease or pulmonary oedema looks like. It is however for those studying for the MRCP or the FRCR, while those wanting (or needing) to test their own knowledge and to learn a few new facts will also find it useful.

The book is quite small, which imposes limitations as only 80 cases are presented. These are limited to diseases of the heart and great vessels. A few paediatric cases are included. X-rays are never easy to reproduce in books and articles, some of the finer detail being lost, but the quality of the illustrations in this book is on the whole quite good, for which the publishers and printers should be congratulated. The writing is clear and references have been kept to a minimum; what is needed is facts, and facts are given.

M. Papouchado

ESSENTIALS OF URORADIOLOGY

E. Stephen Amis Jr. and Jeffrey H. Newhouse

pp xiii + 427, 1991 (Little, Brown and Co), £53.00

The authors' goal, clearly stated in their preface, is to provide an up to date concise textbook of urology, to occupy the niche between multivolume treatises and passages in general texts, aimed at radiology and urology residents.

This book certainly is pleasingly modern and is prolifically illustrated with generally good quality images of virtually all modalities including MRI and transrectal ultrasound scans. The only weaknesses here are the poor quality of some of the trans-abdominal ultrasound images and the deliberately brief coverage of nuclear medicine studies which the authors consider a specialist field beyond the scope of this textbook; an opinion that would find both supporters and opponents in this country.

The text is logically written, easy to read and contains the occasionally dry piece of moral guidance ('it is also incumbent on the radiologist to be aware of the disputed issues since, in medicolegal practice, rigorous science and "expert" legal testimony may not coincide').

The first few chapters deal with the background to urology and cover history (very briefly), anatomy (a useful

terse refresher with good sections on retroperitoneal anatomy and the zones of the prostate), techniques (good brief review of MRI; duplex ultrasound confined to one sentence) and contrast agents (nice concise discussion).

The subsequent chapters dealing with disease are organised largely on a regional basis (the retroperitoneum, the adrenal, the kidney:cystic disease etc.). Conditions are dealt with logically (with discussions of pathology, clinical presentation and imaging techniques) and reasonably comprehensively, given the desire to keep the book as short as possible without avoiding major omissions. The bibliography is generally good (although predictably very American) and up to date. The authors have deliberately, and very reasonably, emphasised diagnostic urology and avoided extensive consideration of interventional techniques. I found the index adequate and easy to use but occasionally idiosyncratic (chyluria is included but haematuria is not).

I believe the authors have achieved their target as stated at the outset. This is an elegant useful book that is informative and a pleasure to read. I would recommend it to any radiologist developing an interest in urology or indeed any general radiologist who finds that a reasonable part of his workload involves investigation of the urinary tract. It is likely to be useful to urologists, especially during their training. Pre-fellowship radiologists would find it excellent for the fellowship examination; if nothing else they would be reminded, in the words of the authors, that 'good radiological practice requires the performance of necessary examinations just as it requires the avoidance of needless ones'.

J. E. Kabala

EVOLUTION AND A CREATOR

Graham Beale

Clinical Press £9.95

This book may be an important contribution to an argument developing in the scientific world about the origin of man. Darwin's theory of Evolution by Natural Selection was in its time a concept so heretical that it took Darwin, a Christian believer, many years before he could commit himself to expound it. It is now so universally accepted that to question it or to seek to modify it is almost equally heretical. Richard Dawkins, in his popular book *The Blind Watchmaker* has shown by computer studies that the operation of chance through aeons of time is sufficient to explain the development of man from the elementary matter of this universe. No need for a Creator. However of recent years a view has been gaining ground amongst some scientists notably in Britain and the USA which they have called the *Anthropic principle*. "There exist invariant properties of the Natural World and its elementary components which render the gross size and structure of virtually all its components quite inevitable. The sizes of stars and planets, even people are neither random nor the result of any Darwinian selection process from a myriad of possibilities.... they are manifestations of the possible equilibrium states between competing forces of attraction and repulsion.... and they are determined by a mysterious collection of pure numbers that we call the *Constants of Nature*. (Barrow and Tipler — *The Anthropic Cosmological Principle*, OUP 1986). The inference can be made that the Universe was designed, in fact that it was created.

From a study of the evolution of bone and the remarkable permanence of its basic design features Graham Beale argues that the gene determining it must have been present in the first cell and survived unchanged. Either this gene appeared by chance or it did not, if the latter, some other agency — a *genetic engineer* — must have formed it. Genetic uniqueness and the

great genetic stability present in all aspects of all life cannot be explained in other ways.

Thus the Anthropic Principle postulates that the physical universe was designed and now Dr. Beale deduces from anatomical studies that the genetic system which governs heredity and thus man was also designed. Both conclusions seem to point to a Creator or "Architect of the Universe."

Dr. Beale's book is well illustrated with X-rays and his case well argued but his conclusion tentative, he ends by asking the question "If that is so, has evolution actually been the result of the action of a Creator? The book is easily readable and with 90 pages modestly priced.

Dr. Beale was a Radiologist who graduated in Medicine from the University of Otago, New Zealand and was Head of the Department of Radiology in Rotorua. Attracted originally by the great reputation of the Bristol University Department of Radiology and its chief, Professor Sir Howard Middlemiss, Graham Beale has visited Bristol and worked there as a locum consultant periodically for a number of years.

The occasion of his last visit was the launching of his book, when your reviewer had the opportunity of meeting him and hearing him expound his ideas. His sudden death shortly after his return to New Zealand was a great shock to all who knew him and the loss of a profound and original thinker.

M. G. Wilson

THE BEST OF MEDICAL HUMOUR

A collection of articles, essays, poetry, and letters published in the medical literature.

Compiled and edited by **Howard J. Bennett**
Hanley and Belfuss. Philadelphia \$30

My interest in this book was aroused when I discovered that it contained an article 'Prolonged haemorrhage following nail clipping' by John Burton whose inspired writings frequently appear in this journal. His article was found under the section 'Case Reports' and on reading further discovered that the patient was a 2 year old male budgerigar employed as an entertainer at a local primary school and that it was reprinted with permission from the Lancet. That was a good start. Of course humour is a serious business and the book is divided into 14 sections under various headings such as 'Medical School', 'Internship and Residency', 'Medical Language', 'Poetry', 'Case Reports' etc. My most serious objection to the book is that there is no index and it took me a long time to locate Dr. Burton's article. However the subject classification will be of practical use. Those about to make an after dinner speech may find that it helps them find inspiration. In fact most of the selections are of a high order and one can browse through the book and even find it difficult to put down. The fact is that most of us seldom find occasion to take up such a book. It is a pity, this book is very worthwhile taking up and moreover, definitely something to give to your medical husband/wife/houseman/registrar for Christmas/birthday — which decides me what next to give my daughter-in-law and mark you, I shall shell out the necessary. I shall keep my reviewer's copy.

M. G. Wilson

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