BOOKS RECEIVED

Principles and practice of infectious diseases

It was my instant pleasure to be asked to review the third edition of Principles and practice of infectious diseases. The third edition is a massive book of some 2400 pages and retains its single volume format, as did the second edition, which is useful for the reader. The appearance of a third edition some 6 years after the first and expanded in size by about 30% reflects the energy of the editors in carrying out a major revision. Each section of the book and its format bear a relationship to the earlier edition but there are new authors and topic headings that reflect the immense changes in infectious diseases over the past few years. In particular, the completely new section on the Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome deserves special commendation. In addition, the section on newly recognised pathogens provides an excellent update for both the interested spectator and the specialist. The book is absolutely encyclopaedic in the topics it covers and the depth to which each chapter author pursues a given topic. Excellent editing has allowed a uniform style and flow throughout the book and this alone is a major achievement considering the 276 authors who have contributed. Undoubtedly, this book is the reference textbook of infectious diseases. The extensive revisions and new inclusions in the third edition make its purchase at £120 completely worthwhile and important for the practising microbiologist and infectious diseases clinician.

G. E. Griffin

Progress in AIDS pathology

This book is an unusual mixture of chapters; many being up-to-date review articles but several taking the style of research papers. In general, they describe the morphological changes in the various organs, demonstrated by ultrastructural, immunohistochemical and in-situ techniques.

The overview chapters are good and, while concentrating on the lungs and nervous system, also give accounts of damage to the heart, the links between AIDS and neoplasia, and the different patterns of disease found at autopsy between intravenous drug-abuse HIV patients and non-drug-abuse HIV cases. As relatively few British pathologists have much, if any, experience of AIDS autopsies, this book is a useful source of information. For example, in 53% of autopsies there is histological evidence of myocarditis although an aetiological agent can be identified in only 7%. In 5%, the heart is involved by malignant lymphoma or Kaposi’s sarcoma. Intravenous drug-abuse AIDS patients have much higher rates of fungal infection than are found in non-intravenous drug users, but the rates are similar for CMV and pneumocystis infections and tuberculosis, and the incidence of neoplasms is much lower. A survey of laboratory practice is reported, with such questions as “Are autopsies performed on AIDS patients?” (89% yes) and “Are frozen sections prepared from tissues from AIDS patients?” (79% yes).

The chapter on lung biopsy interpretation will appeal to histopathologists, microbiologists and clinicians. Firstly, it gives an overview of pulmonary pathology in AIDS, followed by details of the incidence, presentation and appearance of each disease, with sections on the clinical evaluation of pulmonary disease and special laboratory techniques useful in diagnosis.

Much of AIDS pathology is about the complications of immunodeficiency. Two chapters examine the direct effect of the virus on the ultrastructural appearance of cells, and the accounts of “tubulo-reticular inclusions” and “cylindrical confronting cisternae” are interesting. However, the schizoid nature of the book is then apparent as one whole chapter is devoted to a very small study of the electronmicroscopic appearances in 10 patients treated with D-penicillamine. Another chapter deals exclusively with CMV detection in the lung. For me, these would be more appropriately published as journal articles.

Overall, the book concentrates on histopathology but many microbiologists are likely to find it informative, as well as infectious diseases clinicians, neurologists and respiratory physicians.

Susan A. Dilly

Antiviral agents and viral diseases of man

The third edition of this book (1990) follows the success of the earlier editions of 1979 and 1984, and the book has been expanded to include new data in all chapters which are referenced up to 1988; the book is most welcome in bringing the subject as up-to-date as possible for a volume with 26 authors. The subject matter is divided into four sections: the first deals with virus replication and biology and drug development; the second, a long chapter, deals with viral diagnosis; the third, comprising 13 chapters, deals with those clinical syndromes for which some antiviral chemotherapy is available; and the final chapter is devoted to immunisation. The total book length is over 750 pages; and the chapters include from over 100 to over 700 references.

Although entitled Antiviral agents and viral diseases of man, the emphasis is principally on viral infections: the infecting agents and a description of the clinical conditions caused by them are fully described with the latest information; but a mild criticism could be that
some of the older and well known data could have been summarised or even omitted to make the book more easily readable. Most emphasis is given to infection for which chemotherapy is available, and for these there is an admirable account of the clinical virology, and the uses of antiviral compounds in treatment; these latter sections are relatively short, concise and include the latest controversies which is understandable since antiviral chemotherapy is still in its infancy. The text also includes discussion of viral infection for which there is no antiviral chemotherapy, such as some diseases of the central nervous system and infections caused by adenoviruses, and their inclusion in the book is questionable; indeed, the inclusion of a final chapter on immunisation is surprising.

In total, the book represents an important extension of the previous editions, and can be read with advantage and used as a reference by clinical virologists, medical microbiologists, physicians and postgraduate medical, dental and science students. It would form a valuable addition to the personal or departmental library of all who are involved in these specialties.

C. W. POTTER

Medical Mycology. A practical approach

The 15 contributors to this volume in a practical approach series include the most experienced medical mycologists working in the UK, with one from Belgium and three from the USA. It is written with the aim of providing a clear stepwise approach, for medical microbiologists who encounter mycological problems, and succeeds admirably. The work is arranged in chapters that deal with general laboratory diagnosis, direct microscopy, culture and identification of fungi, the identification of agents of superficial mycoses, yeasts, agents of systematic mycoses, common culture contaminants, maintenance and preservation of fungi, serological tests, methods with antifungal drugs and histopathology. There are 28 line drawings and 146 black and white plates.

As stated on the back of the paperback, this well written book does provide “sufficient, detailed practical methods to assist in the laboratory diagnosis and management of mycotic infections and in the identification of the causal fungi”. It is also stated on the back cover that “Since mycotic infections in patients are often difficult to diagnose and treat, this book is therefore an essential requirement for any hospital, diagnostic or research laboratory which may lack such specialist knowledge. This book . . . is an essential text for courses in diagnostic medical mycology”. In the selected bibliography the editors list three introductory books, seven comprehensive/specialised books and six practical books. Indeed, in recent years a number of books on medical mycology have been published and my first reaction when asked to review this was—not another! Nevertheless, the paperback is good value, worth buying and should prove a worthy addition to the bookshelves of most laboratories concerned with the diagnosis of infection.

There are a few criticisms. First, for direct microscopy, the addition of DMSO to KOH in the preparation of keratinised tissue is unnecessary; KOH, alone, causes a non-specific hydrolysis of keratin allowing the specimen to be squashed into a monolayer for microscopic examination. The suggestion that fungal fragments may have a morphology characteristic for allergic broncho-pulmonary aspergillosis, aspergilloma or invasive aspergillosis is original but not substantiated, and the important fact that fungal morphology in a clinical specimen can be affected by antifungal chemotherapy appears to be omitted. Moreover, the observation of aspergillosis-type hyphae in bronchial secretions, even with culture of Aspergillus, may not always provide a definitive diagnosis. A more general criticism is that since the colour of the colony and its reverse pigmentation are important for the identification of many fungi, and so much work has gone into the production of this book, the omission of colour plates is regrettable. At £37.50, purchasing the hardback edition is questionable when other works are so well illustrated in colour.

R. R. DAVIES