

REVIEWS OF BOOKS AND AUDIOVISUAL AIDS

Lawrence M. Solomon, M.D.
Review Editor

Botanical Dermatology, John Mitchell and Arthur Rook, Green-grass, Vancouver, 1979. (787 pp).

This is a large book of 787 pages plus 5 pages of preface. There is a detailed index of 31 double-columned pages. The book is an encyclopedic work, covering in detail every plant that has caused any dermatologic condition whatsoever. It also furnishes some information regarding other effects of plants, some chemistry, and some botany. The book is an invaluable reference to those who are interested in any of the aforementioned. It is not a book for the general reader. It is probably ungenerous to criticize such a stupendous labor of love; yet, to this reviewer, the book is poorly arranged. The biggest flaw is that, as each plant is discussed, all the references to it are listed, but this means that if a single article lists several plants this reference is repeated for each plant mentioned, which adds up to an incredible number of references and makes the book much more bulky and probably more expensive than it need be. Secondly, the plants are arranged by plant families, so that, to find a plant, apart from the index, the reader has to know some botany, which most probably do not.

These criticisms are captious, in that this is the first such work in the English language (probably in any), and the authors deserve accolades for their extreme diligence in ferreting out what must be close to a hundred percent of all relevant material.

Adolph Rostenberg, Jr., M.D.

Cancer Dermatology, Frederick Helm, M. D., Department of Dermatology, Roswell Park Memorial Institute, Buffalo, New York, distributed by Lea and Febiger, Philadelphia, 1977. (501 pp, \$45, clothbound).

Written principally by members and former members of the staff of Roswell Park Memorial Institute, this book was intended to be a handy reference and practical guide for the practitioner involved with management of neoplasms involving the skin. This objective was achieved. As stated in the Forward, it was not intended to be a textbook or encyclopedic work. This nonobjective also was achieved for the book does not compare, for example to a much larger predecessor publication of recent years written by a larger number of authors from many institutions throughout the world. One may conclude that no single institution today has a sufficiently complete staff which by itself could write a more comprehensive book. In this connection the book is exceptional insofar as one institution has provided more than three dozen authors with substantial expertise in the field of cancer dermatology.

Two short chapters in the Appendix should be mentioned. One is by a patient, a minister who conveys in unforgettable style his sequential feelings and responses in living with his lymphoma and its treatment. The other, written by a priest, is a concise instructional essay on counseling the patient with cancer. Although both lessons are more applicable to cases of systemic cancer, they are translatable for application to the more serious cases of cancer that involve the skin.

Eugene J. Van Scott, M.D.
Skin and Cancer Hospital
Temple University School of Medicine
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Gross and Microscopic Pathology of the Skin, Okun and Edelstein, W.B. Saunders Company, 1978. This book was first acquired for distribution by W.B. Saunders Company, Philadelphia, in 1978 and therefore became widely available at that time.

Gross and Microscopic Pathology of the Skin is a 2-volume, 1,118 page text which may more realistically be considered an atlas. Its objectives as described in the preface are only partially achieved. The authors have integrated reasonably well the clinical and histopathological characteristics of disease through the use of photographs and photomicrographs with an extremely concise descriptive outline. Their objectives are not adequately met as they relate to the "subtleties of morphological detail" as the finer points of histological interpretation

in some areas is lacking. Relevant information on pathogenesis, ultrastructure and immunofluorescence are only briefly alluded to and could well be expanded in view of their importance in dermatopathology.

Some of the major problems involve failure to include, to any substantial degree, the personal experience of the authors. Instead they rely on the established material available in other standard texts on the subject. Controversial problems in dermatopathology are either only briefly outlined or avoided completely. Subjects such as panniculitis are oversimplified while other disorders, such as verruca, receive excessive coverage. The section on melanocytic tumors is overall excellent, but even here inconsistencies in space allotment exist, such as 8 pages devoted to melanomas arising in pre-existing nevi. Additionally, there are pages that are totally blank and others that have only few sentences of description. It appears that with the proper selection of photomicrographs, i.e., each one illustrating several histological points, and rearranging the outline description, one could conceivably shorten this 2-volume set to one slightly larger volume and diminish the cost. The selective use of arrows on photomicrographs would enhance their value and make visualization of the adjacent description more meaningful.

The clinical photographs mostly in color, are of excellent quality. The histologic photomicrographs are primarily black and white and generally of good quality with only occasional ones out of sharp focus or too dark to appreciate fine details. The organization and classification of material is excellent with large easy to read print. Practical features of the book include the tables relating to differential diagnosis. These tables provide a concise outline differentiating similar histological entities.

For the experienced skin pathologist there is very little new to gain from this additional reference to the histopathology of the skin. However, after reviewing carefully the concise and organized method used to present their ideas, I believe it to be a worthwhile addition for certain categories of physicians, principally dermatology and pathology residents and practitioners with only a modest interest in this aspect of dermatology.

David Fretzin
Director, Division of Dermatology
Michael Reese Hospital and Medical Center
Chicago, Illinois

The Metabolic Basis of Inherited Disease, 4th Edition, J. B. Stanbury; J. B. Wyngaarden; and D. S. Fredrickson, McGraw-Hill Book Co., New York.

The 4th edition does not diminish this superb text: It remains of constant interest to dermatology. I counted the chapters and pages of this edition (almost 100 pages longer, larger, and heavier than the last) which bore direct relation to diseases of the skin and found that more than two-thirds of the 1800 pages were of direct relevance, no matter how restricted one's view of dermatology might be.

There are contributions and concepts new to this edition; only one chapter from the third edition has been dropped. Many of the illustrations remain from previous editions.

The book starts with an essentially new section on genetic and chromosome biology. Contained therein are very useful tables of old and newly described chromosomal abnormality syndromes, with their pertinent features. This section is followed by the parts devoted to disorders of carbohydrate metabolism, amino acids, lipids, steroids, purine, and pyrimidine, metal, porphyrin, heme, connective tissues, blood, transport, enzymes, and plasma proteins. With about one hundred contributors pooling their resources for one book, it is not difficult to find some areas to disagree with. I found a few, and their miniscule nature should serve as testimony to the overall value of the text. The index is arranged to be of greatest use to those already familiar with a diagnosis, for example, phenylketonuria. This is not much help to the clinician interested in reading about those conditions in which eczema may represent a clinical component. The words "skin," "dermatitis," "eczema," "atopic dermatitis" are not found in the index.