

BOOK REVIEWS

Contact Dermatitis (2nd Edition), by Alexander A. Fisher, M.D. Lea & Febiger, Philadelphia, 1973. (448 pp, \$19.50)

This is a textbook which every clinically oriented dermatologist should rush out and buy—even if he already has the first edition. The first edition of this text filled a great void in the dermatologic literature and has become a standard reference source. The second edition is extensively rewritten, thoroughly updated, and remarkably current in its references. Dr. Fisher has done an excellent job of summarizing the dermatologic literature on contact dermatitis in a readable textbook form.

Dr. Fisher relies heavily on his extensive personal experience; the many practical suggestions and treatment approaches make it obvious that this is written by a master of clinical medicine. This book serves a dual function, being a textbook introduction to contact dermatitis for a dermatologic trainee, while for the experienced dermatologist it is a refresher course as well as reference source. The physician experienced in contact dermatitis may well disagree with a good many of the details in Dr. Fisher's text. This reflects the unfortunate fact that many issues in contact dermatitis are still unsettled, and Dr. Fisher has rightfully chosen to present his personal viewpoints. For those wishing to study in depth the more complex subjects, extensive and well chosen references are provided.

There is a minimum of theory in this textbook; it is a book written for clinicians by an exceptionally able and experienced clinician. Quite rightly, Dr. Fisher spends several chapters on the nitty-gritty of patch testing—the complex biologic test which is the mainstay for investigating contact dermatitis. This is an honest book that clearly indicates the many problems, pitfalls, and technical difficulties in accurate patch testing. The author includes a great deal of specific, practical "how-to-do-it" advice of the sort that is needed for those desiring to perform patch tests rather than just talk about them. How I wish such a book had been available years ago when I first delved into the problems of patch testing!

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Primer on Lupus Erythematosus...for patients...for their families...for their physicians, by John R. Haserick, M.D., and Robert E. Kellum, M.D. The Pilot Inc., Southern Pines, N. C., 1973. (43 pp, \$3.00)

Lupus erythematosus does not lend itself to simple explanations and there has been a need for a reasonable and authoritative statement about the disease and its management to which physicians can refer their patients. Unfortunately, the *Primer on Lupus Erythematosus...for patients...for their families...for their physicians* does not

fill this need. There is too much for the patient, too little for the physician, and misleading information for both. Overemphasis on an unusual classification of lupus does not serve to clarify, and a reference to the preliminary criteria of the American Rheumatism Association for the diagnosis of systemic lupus erythematosus would have been helpful (Arthritis Rheum 15:541, 1972). The authors' promotion of nitrogen mustard at a time when other alkylating agents such as cyclophosphamide are more widely used in systemic lupus erythematosus, if cytotoxic agents are used at all, seems unwarranted. The reader is given the incorrect impression that all patients with systemic lupus erythematosus require "regular routine use of corticosteroids." It is disturbing to read lists of specific tests and routines to be carried out by patients and their doctors in a condition which varies so much from patient to patient. Its management should be carefully tailored to each case. Moreover, many of the tests recommended in the *Primer* are erroneous (urine "sedimentation rate," etc.) or inappropriate (urine concentration test, quantitative eosinophile count, urea clearance, etc.). Finally, lupus patients, especially those who never have a rash at all, are often frightened by photographs of lupus lesions. The *Primer* contains several such photographs in grim detail.

This booklet will not be useful to most patients with lupus or their physicians. The patient with systemic lupus erythematosus would be much better served by the pamphlet entitled *SLE—Systemic Lupus Erythematosus* recently published by The Arthritis Foundation. The physician should consult the *Primer on the Rheumatic Diseases* (JAMA 224 (Suppl):701, 1973) and other standard and current references.

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Pigment Cell, Series Editor, V. Riley. **Volume I, Mechanisms in Pigmentation**, Volume Editors, V. J. McGovern and P. Russell. S. Karger, Basel, München, Paris, London, New York, Sydney, 1973. (414 pp, \$37.00)

This volume I, of *Pigment Cell*, constitutes the proceedings of The Eighth International Pigment Cell Conferences and comprises 51 papers in various fields of pigment cell research. Many of the authors are already well known for their outstanding contributions to the knowledge of the pigment cell. Nine of the papers deal with melanocyte morphology; twelve deal with the chemistry of melanogenesis and the chemistry of melanin; six deal with the control of pigmentation and experimental pharmacology. The remainder of the volume is concerned with the biology of melanomas, including the epidemiology, biochemistry, and immunology of melanomas.

Each subject is presented in a systematic manner with the contents of every headed subsection clearly and succinctly put. The value of the work is greatly increased by the full list of references at the end of each paper. The book is well illustrated and the authors, editors, and publishers are to be congratulated on the high standard of reproduction.

It is impossible to read this volume, which I understand is the first of a numbered series, without feeling some of the excitement which research into the pigment cell has provided so many researchers. The diverse techniques and their applications described in different sections of the book will provide useful information for both the biologist and the clinician. It is an excellent example of a good interdisciplinary monograph and deserves to be read by all interested in this field.

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Books Received

The Third Conference on The Clinical Delineation of Birth Defects. Part XII: Skin, Hair and Nails, Daniel Bergsma, M.D. (ed.). Birth Defects: Original Article Series, Vol. VII, No. 8, June 1971. The Williams and Wilkins Company, Baltimore, 1972.

The following books have been received and will be reviewed in a subsequent issue.

Parents' Guide to Allergy in Children, Claude A. Frazier, M.D. Doubleday & Company, Inc., New York, 1973.

Consultations in Dermatology II with Walter B. Shelley, Walter B. Shelly, M.D. W. B. Saunders Company, Philadelphia, London, Toronto, 1974.

Syphilis and Other Venereal Diseases, W. J. Brown, J. E. Donohue, N. W. Axnick, J. H. Blount, N. H. Ewen, and O. G. Jones (eds.). Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1973.