

Book Reviews

A Window on Leprosy. Gandhi Memorial Leprosy Foundation. Silver Jubilee Commemorative Volume, edited by B. R. Chatterjee. January, 1978.

This is a strongly-bound and well-printed book of 395 pages, produced to celebrate the Silver Jubilee of the above Foundation. There are 58 contributors, all experts in the field of leprosy, and the chapter headings include—Epidemiology, Pathology, Microbiology, Immunology, Treatment, Control, together with sections outlining the work of WHO, ILEP, various voluntary agencies and “Trends of Leprosy in India”. Many of the contributors are indeed from India yet the overall content and application of this valuable book is decidedly international. By their very nature, some subjects such as the drug treatment of untreated, and dapsone-resistant lepromatous leprosy, and the management of adverse reactions will probably not survive well in the present climate of discussion and change, but others, particularly histopathology and pathology, should stand many years as standard sources of reference. This book should be on the working shelves of all those seriously interested in leprosy. Details of its cost and postal charges may be obtained from—Dr B. R. Chatterjee, Leprosy Field Research Unit, The Leprosy Mission, Silkra Hills, Jhalda, West Bengal, 723202, India.

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Essentials of Leprosy, by J. M. H. Pearson and H. W. Wheate, 2nd edit. 1977. All Africa Leprosy and Rehabilitation Training Centre, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

It is a courageous undertaking to attempt a description of leprosy in 50 printed pages, including epidemiology, bacteriology, clinical features, classification, immunology, reactional phases, differential diagnosis, control, and all aspects of management, and the authors are to be congratulated on the successful outcome of their venture. I stress the authors' courage because of their coverage of so many aspects of such a complex subject, and because of the criticisms that fellow leprologists are sure to make, for it may not be generally appreciated that no statement can be made on any aspect of leprosy without someone challenging it. For my part I find in this text much more to praise than to criticize, but I have reservations about accepting two recommendations on the difficult subject of managing leprosy reactions. Firstly, to give maximal dosage of DDS in borderline leprosy from the very beginning of treatment and to continue throughout reversal (upgrading) reaction, and I would venture to say that this line of treatment may account for the warning on p. 33 that reversal reaction may require steroid therapy for 6–8 months in BT and for a year or more in BL; in my experience reversal reactions in borderline leprosy are not only unusual but are fairly quickly controlled with the help of prednisone in patients given a maximum of 5 mg DDS daily during the first 6 months of anti-leprosy treatment (the period in which reversal reaction is liable to occur), small dosage of DDS being continued throughout the reaction. Secondly, in the management of severe episodes of ENL, the authors break new ground in opposing the generally accepted view that dosage of steroid should be tapered off.

This booklet is not for the beginner—for whom such intensive and condensed instruction will have little meaning—but will prove of value to experienced leprosy workers, whether medical auxiliaries or qualified doctors, as a “refresher” which can be read slowly, from beginning to end, in the space of one hour.

W. H. JOPLING