

Book Reviews

***Clinical Leprosy.* Virendra N. Sehgal (Third Edition 1993)**

This small textbook has been written for medical practitioners and undergraduates from the standpoint of leprosy in India.

A brief chapter on epidemiology summarizes the distribution of leprosy in India. The clinical features and the histopathology of the various forms of leprosy are well described, following the Indian Classification (with the addition of 'histoid leprosy'), and both are illustrated by black and white photographs.

A major deficiency is the omission of any description of the techniques of clinical examination necessary to reach a diagnosis, and of the precise details of how to test for the loss of sensation in a skin lesion, how to palpate peripheral nerves and assess enlargement and tenderness and how to take a skin smear by the 'slit and scrape' method. Concerning this last, the statement (p. 4) that 'smears are prepared from scrapings from a skin infection of the lesion' is most confusing. The staining procedure described is the hot method, the cold method is not mentioned. It is recommended that a minimum of 7 sites be examined.

The clinical features and treatment of reactions are covered rather briefly and insufficient emphasis is given to the importance of early diagnosis and early treatment of neuritis in Type 1 reactions.

It is surprising that in such a recent publication deformities and disabilities are described under the now superseded 5-Grade WHO system.

In the chapter on therapy, the antileprotic drugs in common use are described, with their dosage and side-effects. The inclusion of amithiozone is of doubtful value and no evidence is given for the statement that monthly rifampicin and the WHO-recommended schedule for multibacillary leprosy may predispose to drug resistance, persists and relapse. The newer drugs are listed briefly.

One chapter is devoted to the reprinting *in toto* of the ILEP Medical Commission's useful and practical recommendations on the Basic Requirements for Implementation of MDT (1989). Another gives a concise review of drug resistance, persists and relapse, somewhat marred, however, by the inclusion of the now outdated U.S. Public Health Service Drug Regimens.

Chapters on Urban Leprosy and Prevention and Control are specifically related to the Indian situation, though the view expressed in favour of segregation is controversial.

There are a number of typing errors and misprints, the most confusing being in the grading of the lepromin test (pp. 6 and 7).

Regretfully, this book cannot be recommended for use outside India.

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Published by Jaypee Brothers Medical Publishers (P) Ltd., New Delhi. 198 pages, 10 Appendices. Price Rs. 125.00.

***Leprosy: diagnosis and management.* Dr C. K. Job, Dr A. J. Selvapandian and Dr C. K. Rao**

This little book on leprosy is unashamedly Indian in its approach and is thus a useful corrective to a number of other small books on leprosy which tend to stress the African experience and viewpoint.

It is written for busy medical practitioners and enquiring students so that they can obtain an understanding of the disease and the basic essentials of management. Nevertheless, the title is misleading, as the book proceeds from history through epidemiology, pathogenesis, immunology and complications on to diagnosis and management of the disease and its several medical, surgical and rehabilitative sequelae. The need for the normal appearance of the patient to counteract stigma is stressed. In such a small book, it is clearly necessary to be a little dogmatic but generalizations have been kept to a minimum and statements are usually in line with current thinking.

In the absence of any references, it is a pity that there are no suggestions for further reading other than two large textbooks of leprosy.

I found it interesting that although the Ridley–Joppling classification had generally been accepted, the 5 other systems variously used in India still needed a discussion and the Job and Chako modification which omits mid-borderline disease seems to hold sway.

Immunology is rather narrowly confined to the lepromin test and antibody tests without a clear account of their usefulness in practice. Some comment on the genetics of susceptibility and the role of the HLA system might have enlivened this chapter. The interesting discussion of the variations on treatment regimes recommended by the World Health Organization ends with a description of the Indian preference which takes account of the difficulty experienced in distinguishing between persistent activity and immunological reactivity in Indian patients. I wonder if trivalent antimonials are really still used for reactional states in India now that Chloroquine and corticosteroids are so widely available.

Excellent accounts of disease of the eye, nose and peripheral nerves are followed by a succinct account of the Indian approach to control and the management of deformities. The ordinary practitioner might like more emphasis on the need for education of the patient but he will find the practical attitude for the management of plantar ulcers useful. A fuller account of the pathogenesis of these ulcers would have made it clear that plantar ulcers are always full depth.

This book undoubtedly provides a useful introduction to the disease in India but the enquiring student will need to look beyond it if he is to gain an understanding of pathogenesis and the basis of chemotherapy, for example, or to obtain a glimpse of the advances made by contemporary science in the several disciplines that go to make up a study of leprosy.

Anthony Bryceson