

Book Reviews

B. Raymond Fink, M.D., Editor

Immunology. A Programmed Text. By J. W. STREILEIN and J. D. HUGHES. Boston, Little, Brown and Company, 1977. Pages: 337. Price: PNS.

The authors have produced a primer to allow self-instruction in the principles of immunology. The format is that of a statement on one page that includes a question, usually consisting of either a blank to complete or a multiple choice to be made, answered on the next page. There are 671 such sequences. The reader begins going through these, then reaches the last page of the book, when he must turn the book over and go back through the next sequence (printed upside down) until the front of the book (depending on how you look at it) is reached, then turn the book over again and . . . All this is actually somewhat amusing, and at first one feels he's really accomplishing something since he's moving so quickly through the pages. No matter that he'll have seven more trips to complete before he's done.

Now, what about the content of this course? It is good, solid, traditional immunology, plus a sprinkling of fairly recent findings. The reader will learn a lot about immunology if the tedium of the early parts of the presentation can be endured. It starts slowly and stays that way for quite awhile. The formal definition of the immune response and its components is worked over and over until one wonders when the authors are ever going to get on with it. When they finally do, the rest of the book is amusing, informative and worth the effort.

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Local Anesthetics. Second edition. By R. H. DE JONG. Springfield, Ill., Charles C Thomas, 1977. Pages: 338. Price: \$32.50.

The expanding use of local anesthetics is both cause and result of the greatly improved understanding of their properties obtained in recent years. Knowledge of their mode of action is, if possible, even more important for local anesthetics than general anesthetics, for once the local anesthetic has been injected there is no re-treating. Remarkable progress has been made, so much so that this volume, initially intended as a revision of the author's well known *Physiology and Pharmacology of Local Anesthetics* has in fact become a wholly new text.

de Jong's stature as a scholar, teacher, and investigator is patent on every page. To an exceptional power of lucid exposition he adds a deft spryness of style that gives his story an altogether delightful verve. The material is so interesting, so well put together and so well written that, believe it or not, once on one's way one is hard put to stop. The publisher, too, has catered to reading comfort by setting the text in large type in double columns on matt paper.

Needless to say, one can find a few shortcomings. The bibliography, though quite extensive and up to date, is a little unbalanced, getting on for half of it being cited in the 20 pages devoted to central nervous system reactions. One notices particularly a paucity of references in the early chapters on history—barely two pages on that—, the neural target, and impulse propagation.

The diagrams illustrating the sections on impulse blockade and the blocking progress have a didactic effectiveness that justifies their simplicity, but this cannot be said of the drawing of a nerve

in cross-section, nor of the one giving an idealized representation of the nerve membrane. Its ideal is passé. The portrait of receptors, however, is a delight and wryly up to date. The graphic discussion of the kinetics of neural spread of the agent, though notably clear, is almost entirely a product of theory and common sense, two by no means reliable substitutes for concrete observations. Neither is it of any help in solving the conundrum of what proportion of the afferent fibers must be blocked to stop the feeling of pain. But these, of course, are limitations of knowledge and not of the book.

The high level of exposition and comprehensiveness is maintained throughout the chapters on cardiovascular effects, absorption, biotransformation and last, adverse effects, with a happy balance between narrow information and broad understanding, although a diagram illustrating phase 4 in a pacemaker cell would be a useful addition. For good measure there are appended tables of trade names, safe dosages (though nary a word about cocaine), dissociation constants, and molecular weights. In the text table of tissue partition coefficients one notes with surprise the presence of coefficients for all sorts of organs but not one for nerve, presumably because none is available. The discussion of distribution volumes of etidocaine, lidocaine, mepivacaine and bupivacaine, pegged at 133, 91, 84 and 71 liters, respectively, invites misunderstanding through failing to insist that these are *apparent* distribution volumes. One more trifle—the structural diagrams of cocaine and β -cocaine ought to be unified.

de Jong's explanation of rate constant by means of a loan interest rate of 6 per cent per annum takes one back to the good old days. No matter. The good old days are right now, for all to enjoy who acquire his book. Learning was never pleasanter.—*B.R.F.*

Blood Transfusion for the Clinicians. By J. WALLACE. New York, Churchill Livingstone, 1977. Pages: 351. Price: \$22.50.

According to the author, the objective of this book is to provide a simple, but comprehensive, account of the general principles of blood transfusion to clinicians who use transfusion therapy. The author states that the book is organized in such a way that the individual practitioner can be selective with his particular interests in blood transfusion. This, he asserts, is accomplished by writing each chapter as a separate topic with frequent cross references to coordinate various aspects of blood transfusion mentioned in other chapters. Although he is well intentioned and has written a comprehensive account of blood transfusion, his book is not well organized, lacks illustrations and is therefore subject to visual monotony, and is written in such a manner that the clinician cannot readily refer to a particular subject not covered as a specific chapter. For example, the anesthesiologist looking for information about the problems associated with massive transfusion must refer to several chapters and is forced to read entire chapters since headings within each chapter are unclear and do not indicate the particular subject matter being covered. In addition, the book is poorly referenced for those wishing to do further reading on subjects covered only superficially. This criticism is particularly valid for the anesthesiologist, since many of the topics of particular interest to him, such as microaggregate filtration, citrate intoxication, and treatment of transfusion reactions, are only marginally covered by the author.

These comments, however, should not detract from the overall