BOOK REVIEWS

Clinical Phonocardiography. By D. C. Deuchar. (Pp. xii + 144; illustrated; 25s.) London: English Universities Press. 1964.

Recently there has been a considerable revival of interest in phonocardiography, partly owing to the contribution of this technique to the study of haemodynamics and perhaps even more because it has increased the value of clinical auscultation. This book is intended as an introduction to the potentialities and use of the technique for practitioners and students. It fulfils this function admirably. The initial chapters give a clear account of the physical requirements for sound recording and of the production of cardiovascular sounds and murmurs. This is followed by an analysis of phonocardiographic patterns in heart disease, and of the effect of drugs and other agents which alter the phonocardiogram. A useful selected bibliography is appended. Unfortunately (apart from a few sample records) the illustrations are line drawings, and, although this simplifies and clarifies the presentation, it is a disadvantage in learning interpretation of actual records.

The writing is lucid, the opinions expressed are well balanced, and due consideration is given to conflicting opinions. It is a good introduction to the subject and to be recommended to all those interested in this field.

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Basic Cardiology, 2nd ed. By T. E. Gumpert. (Pp. vii + 234; illustrated; 42s.) Bristol: Wright. 1964.

This small book is based on lectures given to medical students and postgraduates. Since the original edition in 1958 chapters have been added on electrocardiography by the author, on cardiac catheterization by Dr. David Verel, and on angiocardiology by Dr. Ronald Grainger. The aim is to bridge the gap between specialist textbooks and the descriptions of heart disease to be found in textbooks of internal medicine.

The approach to the subject is traditional and has not been modified by the inclusion of the excellent new chapters on the elements of cardiac catheterization and angiocardiology, which seem to stand apart from the rest of the book. The description of angiocardiology is concerned with much more than the technique, and it overlaps, from a different point of view, the chapter on congenital heart disease. In the major part of the book it is sometimes hard to accept the tenacity with which tradition dominates the opinions expressed: the section on heart disease in pregnancy asserts that congestive heart failure is 'the most frequent cause of death' in pregnant women with mitral stenosis, and pulmonary oedema (which has been shown to cause more deaths in pregnancy) receives relatively little comment. In discussing ischaemic heart disease it is stated that 'it is now

usual to equate coronary sclerosis (atheroma) with angina pectoris, and coronary thrombosis with myocardial infarction . . .' although it is widely recognized that the sudden onset of angina pectoris may be the only symptom of coronary occlusion with myocardial infarction. It is strange to find expressions reminiscent of popular medicine such as 'a pukka coronary thrombosis' and (as a chapter heading) 'When is a murmur not a murmur?'

The book is short and easy to read; it is admirably produced and has many excellent illustrations, particularly in the section on angiocardiology.

A. MORGAN JONES

L'Hygiene et La Sécurité dans L'Emploi des Benzols. By A. Vallaud, V. Raymond, and P. Salmon. (Pp. 142; illustrated; price not stated.) Paris: Institut National de Sécurité. 1964.

The third edition of this attractive little book has been entirely recast and brought up to date. It retains its value in giving an insight into the attitudes and practice concerning the use of benzene and its homologues in France.

It is divided like Gaul into three parts; first, a general description of the chemistry of benzene and its homologues (described as 'benzols'); secondly, a discussion of the toxicology of this group of substances, including the medical criteria used in the diagnosis and evaluation of cases and information on compensation of benzene poisoning illustrated with some figures from recent years; thirdly, a section on the control of the hazard including detection, ventilation, labelling, and the use of substitutes. Each section has a list of supplementary reading.

The features which strike the British reader are:—

(1) The detailed nature of the French legislation on the subject (26 texts are mentioned), including as it does directions to the physician on the haematological criteria for fitness, extensive prohibitions on the use of benzene, elaborate compensation provisions referring to the processes in which benzene is used and the disorders to which it gives rise, and specific instructions about red, green or yellow labels according to the benzene content of the material.

(2) That for all this elaborate legislation the number of cases were 92 in 1960 (nine fatal), 103 in 1961 (five fatal), and 95 in 1962 (10 fatal). Our figures for the corresponding years were nil, nil, and four (one fatal).

Either we are lucky, or farsighted, or our criteria for benzene poisoning are different from those of the French.

(3) There appears to be a wide use of benzol in spite of the prohibitions in a variety of industries where it is not used in this country—dry cleaning for example—reminding us that when dry cleaning (or French cleaning as it was originally called) was introduced into this country, the solvent was benzene.