Book Reviews

Blood Platelets
M. Gawaz,
Thieme Publishers, 2002,
190 pages, price £39.95.

This excellent little book provides an overview of physiology, pathophysiology and membrane receptors. In addition, there are chapters in relation to anti-platelet drugs, coronary heart disease, stroke and peripheral artery disease. This is a rapidly progressing area, with information from clinical trials, authoritative consensus statements from bodies such as the American College of Chest Physicians, and meta-analyses from trialists collaborating over statistical programmes.

The book is well-illustrated and well referenced and it is clear that many clinicians and non-clinicians would [like platelets in vascular disease] adhere to this book or even aggregate round it in book shops!

The author has clearly done a tremendous amount of work in the area as evident by many of his publications which have been used as the references. The text does not overstate the case and in fact provides insights into what is yet to come. Particularly useful to the diehard evidence-based trialists are the inclusion of many of the recent trials of anti-platelets therapies which are discussed or referenced. In addition, many of the results, tables and graphs which are, thus saving the claudicating trip to the local medical school library.

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Vascular Manifestations of Systemic Autoimmune Diseases
R. A. Asherson and R. Cervera.
CRC Press, 2001,
601 pages, price £87.

The writing and marketing of any text should relate to a target audience. “Vasculitis” is targeted primarily at general physicians, including rheumatologists and immunologists, but could be of wider interest to other clinicians, including vascular surgeons. “Systemic Autoimmune Diseases” is addressed to the reader, undefined, but probably rheumatologists as the target audience. Hence the organisation of these two books is very different. Not surprisingly, I found “Vasculitis” the more useful of the two books.

“Vasculitis” starts with a succinct overview of the vasculitic syndromes, the common and not so common. Part I provides a glimpse of the intense activity in areas of basic science and pathogenesis, highlighting the biology of endothelial cells and the hypersensitivity reaction. These chapters are up-to-date but suffer from lack of illustrations. Thereafter the book has an excellent series of illustrated chapters on the oral, ophthalmologic, pulmonary, digital and other manifestations of vasculitis. This could be of particular help to the surgeon whose patient reports a really sore mouth or other symptoms that do not usually confront the vascular surgeon. However, the reader needs to be aware that the colour illustrations are collected together, away from these chapters in the centre of the book.

Many patients with vasculitis have early onset atherosclerosis and die from cardiovascular disease. There are two helpful chapters on imaging, including the use of magnetic resonance imaging in the diagnosis of Takayasu’s arteritis and duplex imaging for the diagnosis of temporal (giant cell) arteritis. Thereafter, “Vasculitis” provides a series of chapters dedicated to the presentation, pathology, treatment and prognosis of the major vasculitic syndromes. There is an interesting chapter on Vasculitis of the Central Nervous System, an elusive form of vascular inflammatory disease. This chapter may be of particular help with the
diagnosis of cerebral vascular disease, when no major disease in the extracranial carotid arteries has been demonstrated.

“Vascular Manifestations of Systemic Autoimmune Diseases” has a gallery of illustrious authors, but no colour illustrations. The first fourteen chapters focus on the mechanisms of vascular disease, almost on a protein-by-protein or molecule-by-molecule basis. This is followed by sections on the clinical manifestations of selected syndromes in Part II and chapters on treatment in Part III. I did not find this division useful and information about Takayasu’s arteritis was spread over 4–5 chapters. The editing of chapters appeared more light-handed than for “Vasculitis”, making the book rather patchy with some excellent chapters (e.g., those on antineutrophil cytoplasmic antibodies and therapy of systemic vasculitis) and some that were quite difficult to read. Alternatively this is a book for rheumatologists and clinical immunologists rather than other clinicians.

Budgets for books may be limited, but for the vascular or endovascular specialist paying the extra to buy “Vasculitis” would be offset by the added value of faster and easier access to current, relevant information.

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