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Book notices

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease: Current Concepts. Edited by JE Hodgkin and TL Petty. (Pp 316; £23-50.) Philadelphia: WB Saunders, 1987. ISBN NO 0-7216-1897-9.

This book aims "to provide a state-of-the-art discussion regarding the diagnosis and treatment of COPD" written by a team of 23 North American experts and one from the United Kingdom. The emphasis is on practical management; many of the chapters are reviews of expected topics such as definitions, pathogenesis, laboratory evaluation, exercise training, sleep disorders, drug treatment, and prognosis. These accounts provide the expected similarities to, and differences from, UK practice (cost of spirometry \$102, adjusting theophylline dosage for eaters of barbecued food, a different list of non-narcotic antitussive agents, etc). The unusual aspect of the book for a UK reader is the space devoted to less precise areas, such as psychosocial rehabilitation and psychopharmacology, relaxation techniques and biofeedback, disability evaluation, sexual problems, ambulatory and home care, and ethical dilemmas. Many of these topics are managed informally (if at all) in the UK so it is instructive to read of more formal (even paternalistic) approaches, even though these are sometimes discussed at too great length. The editors see the volume as presenting the increase in knowledge about treatment of chronic obstructive lung disease during the last decade; though there have been improvements, there has been nothing remotely comparable to the changes provided by coronary artery surgery for myocardial ischaemia. For this reviewer the dominant impression on putting down the book was disappointment that over the last 20 years respiratory physicians have not applied and assessed the few modifying factors we have had to offer these disabled patients more rigorously; as it is, what is useful and what is redundant remains uncertain.—NBP

Lung cancer: Current Status and Prospects for the Future. 2nd ed. CF Mountain and DT Carr. (Pp 440; \$60.) University of Texas Press, 1987. ISBN NO 0-292-74652-0.

This work represents the proceedings of a conference on lung cancer. The authors are distinguished in this area of research and the conference surveys our present state of knowledge, current controversies, and possible areas of advance. It underlines the difference between the American and British approaches to lung cancer. In general, the therapeutic approach is more aggressive and sometimes a little uncritical. In the chapter on selection for surgical treatment the five year survival for stage III tumours is surprisingly good at 30%, but it is uncertain how patients were selected for resection apart from staging. Those dying within 30 days of resection were excluded from the survival figures, which no doubt improves these. The theoretical sections convey an impression of the vast amount of experimental work done in America. Much of it may represent Brownian motion but at least they are trying, which is a start in improving management. Any multicentre publication usually contains a combination of gems and less valuable stones. The section on current concepts of chemotherapy and radiotherapy for small cell carcinoma is an excellent review for the clinician and that on experimental approaches to improve the results of radiotherapy for non-small cell carcinoma is a model of clarity of expression. On the other hand, the section on cellular genes in human neoplasia is written in cipher and is incomprehensible. The section on new approaches to using monoclonal antibodies is four pages long, has 11 eminent authors, and contains no message. In general, this is a valuable book for anyone interested in lung cancer, with something for the specialist and for the person seeking an overall view of the transatlantic approach.