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Book notices

Abnormalities of Respiration during sleep. E C Fletcher. (Pp 252; $39·50.) Orlando, Florida: Grune and Stratton, 1986. ISBN 0-8089-1812-5.

There has been a rush of books on sleep (and breathing) disorders over the last two years and these are probably the best:

1 Saunders NA, Sullivan CE, eds. *Sleep and breathing*. New York: Marcel Dekker, 1984.
2 Kryger MH, ed. *Clinics in Chest Medicine: Symposium on sleep disorders*. Philadelphia: WB Saunders, 1985.
3 Thawley SE, ed. *Medical Clinics of North America: Symposium on sleep apnea disorders*. Philadelphia: WB Saunders, 1985.
4 Parkes JD. *Sleep and its disorders*. London: WB Saunders, 1985.

The first three of these accounts tend to be mainly from North American sources and thus contain extensive reviews of the published work with little interpretation or "clinical feel." The collection of Saunders and Sullivan remains the definitive academic text at present but this new book from Eugene Fletcher is a much better and shorter account for clinicians coping with sleep and breathing disorders. Despite the clinical flavour no really important academic aspects are ignored. The best chapters, by Fletcher himself, are very readable and up to date, and analyse and comment rather than just recount, and they include, for example, case histories to give a good clinical feel to the subject. It is a pity that Fletcher did not also write the "Clinical manifestations of sleep apnoea" chapter as well. The "Mechanisms of sleep apnoea" chapter by Kuna and Remmers is a very balanced account, as is the description of surgical treatments by Cohn. I can thoroughly recommend this book as a sensible and careful account of a subject that has unfortunately gained a reputation for extravagance of claims in both diagnosis and treatment. This and Parkes's book recounting non-respiratory sleep disorders together cover best this rapidly growing area for European readers and will be appreciated by both newcomers and old hands in the subject.—JRS

Respiratory Disease. A E Tattersfield and M W McNicol. (Pp 288; £14·95.) London: Springer Verlag, 1987. ISBN 3-540-16209-7.

This book is one of a series entitled "Treatment in Clinical Medicine." I found it to be both informative and wide ranging in its content, with adequate references for the inquiring reader. The title is perhaps misleading as almost two thirds of the book deals with basic mechanisms, pathophysiology, and treatment of the whole range of respiratory disorders in a concise and up to date fashion, and in a conventional way much as is found in other texts. The final third of the book discusses the pharmacological, therapeutic, and toxicological aspects of all the various types of drugs which a respiratory physician would use with the exception of cytotoxic agents, which are not discussed in detail. I believe that the book could usefully have included more in this area, particularly on the general side effects and those associated with specific drugs. Otherwise, the detail and scope of discussion in this latter section is far greater than that found in existing texts, and this would be useful for the respiratory specialist. The arrangement of the book is a little awkward—for example, to read about the treatment of asthma the reader would be required to refer to chapter 4 for a generalised outline of management and subsequently to chapters 14–19 for a more detailed consideration of the various drugs involved. This inevitably leads to some repetition. Overall this is an interesting text that usefully fills a gap in the existing range. In their preface the authors suggest that it is most suitable for those beginning to specialise in respiratory medicine and for such individuals I strongly recommend it. It is not, however, a book aimed at the undergraduate unless he has a particular interest in therapeutics.—CRS

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