

Cancer Research Workshop on Thymic Tumours in 1987. The papers are arranged in three sections: "From the symptom to the pathological diagnosis," "Therapeutic retrospects of invasive thymomas," and "Therapeutic strategies in inoperable thymomas." The first section overall gives a comprehensive review of the basic understanding of thymic disease covering anatomy, epidemiology, clinical manifestations, surgery, and pathology. Although the inclusion of case reports of rare entities such as thymic carcinoid tumours as part of MEN 1 is questionable this section in general is well presented and comprehensive, giving the reader a succinct view of current publications. The second section presents data on imaging techniques and the results of primary treatment for various types of thymoma. There are clear demonstrations of the value of new imaging techniques such as computed tomography and MRI in the assessment of thymic tumours. The results of operative treatment in some large series is presented. The final section addresses the therapeutic options available for advanced thymomas. The various results of radiotherapy and chemotherapeutic regimens are presented. There are few comprehensive texts on thymic tumours. This book provides a useful and interesting compellation of up to date information. I would encourage those working in this field to peruse it and recommend libraries serving thoracic units to stock it—IOE

**Respiratory Physiology.** (Lung Biology in Health and Disease, vol 40). HK Chang, Manuel Paiva. (Pp 869; \$180.) New York: Dekker 1989. ISBN 0-8247-7855-3.

This book is devoted to those aspects of respiratory physiology that lend themselves to mathematical analysis. One finds therefore that of the 25 contributors no less than 17 have their doctorates in engineering or physics. Subjects covered include morphometry; gas flow, distribution, and mixing; gas exchange (three chapters); control of breathing; mechanics of the parenchyma, interstitium, and circulation. It is refreshing to find a number of less familiar names as

contributors, especially from Europe. The great merit of such a book is that it brings together and condenses much fascinating work that has been previously published in widely scattered original articles. Unfortunately many of us who are clinicians do not have the mathematical facility to appreciate fully much of this sort of work. Most contributors, however, translate their concepts into graphs and line drawings which, together with beautiful photomicrographs, help understanding. There is no doubt that the application of theory derived from engineering, physics, and other disciplines to the problems of respiratory physiology has resulted in a ferment of intellectual activity and shed new light on old problems. This is very exciting for those engaged in this work. As clinicians we are inclined to ask the question, "Yes, but has any of this actually made any difference to patients?" The short answer is, "No, not yet and not directly." This is basic research and should not be judged by that sort of utilitarian yardstick. It is an attempt to understand the structure and function of the lung at a deeper level. Any clinical application that might come out of the work would be a bonus. Although most clinicians will find parts of this book tough going it is to be hoped that most would find at least some chapters give them a further view of an area of their own especial interest. A book worth considering for your hospital library if not your own.—JSM

## Notice

### Course on pharmacology of asthma

A course on the pharmacology of asthma will be held from 27 November to 1 December 1989 at the National Heart and Lung Institute, Dovehouse Street, London SW3 6LY (organiser Professor P J Barnes). Details from the Postgraduate Centre at the Institute (01 352 8121).