**Book reviews**

*International Textbook of Obesity*

Per Björntorp (Ed.)

Wiley, 2001. 546pp. £150. ISBN: 0-471-98870-7

Obesity is now recognized as the most important nutritional problem of the richer societies but increasingly also of the third world. It is therefore not surprising that the literature on this subject is as massive as the problem. This is yet another textbook on the subject, so is it worth a second glance? Possibly yes.

As usual this is a multi-author book comprising 35 chapters subdivided into six sections. There are the usual expected chapters on the ‘global problem’, epidemiology, body composition, appetite control, macronutrient balance, exercise, energy expenditure, central obesity and treatment modalities. There are, however, some interesting new approaches to the design of this particular textbook especially relevant to healthcare delivery. Lindahl discusses screening of the population, especially in relationship to obesity and type 2 diabetes mellitus, providing worldwide examples and experiences of selective programmes. The waist measurement technique and its correlation with morbidity described in the chapter by Han and Lean may well be a useful simple device to use for population screening. ‘Social and cultural influences on obesity’ is another novel chapter and the addition of a complete section on weight gain in pregnancy and puerperium is comprehensive. Both are fascinating reviews, rarely discussed to this depth in textbooks and are to be welcomed. The editor (Per Björntorp) has a particular interest in stress and puerperium is comprehensive. Both are fascinating reviews, rarely discussed to this depth in textbooks and are to be welcomed. The author of this book have probably played as big a role as anyone in highlighting the need for a thorough work-up of such patients. The authors of this book have probably played as big a role as anyone in highlighting the importance of environmental interactions.

Besides the usually expected chapters on the role of neurotransmitters, hormonal abnormalities and dietary fat, a review is included by Walker and Seckl on their interesting research on the cortisol–cortisone shuttle and its possible role in the development of central obesity. The section on complications provides in-depth reviews on the metabolic syndrome, cardiovascular disease, cancer, pulmonary conditions and gallstones. There is also a section on the risks of weight loss as well as the usual description of health benefits. In keeping with the modern way of thinking the editor has included a chapter on quality of life measures for all modalities of obesity therapy and prevention measures. With the rising prevalence of obesity in children a complete detailed description on this topic would have been welcomed. As obesity in the elderly is an issue in the rising incidence of type 2 diabetes I would have wished to read a more expansive discourse on obesity in the elderly rather than the few paragraphs provided. Overall, there are some interesting additions in this textbook which will not be lost in the specialist’s library. However, a better option would be the introduction of website retrieval on a chapter by chapter basis as a more useful and cost effective method of acquiring those sections of interest to the specialist.

Roland Jung

*Andrology: Male Reproductive Health and Dysfunction, 2nd Edition*

E. H. M. Nieschlag and H. M. Behre (Eds)

Springer–Verlag, 2001. 454pp. ISBN: 9783540672241

This is a comprehensive and highly readable book that no andrologist, whether a practising clinician or a lab-based scientist, should be without. The book is written very much for the clinical andrologist but because it links recent advances in the basic science of andrology to disorders that every clinician seeing andrological patients will face, it provides an excellent overall guide to andrology in all its aspects. Apart from the comprehensive nature of the contents, the other two particularly impressive features are the clear textual layout and the excellent quality of the illustrations, many of which are in colour. These features make this book an ideal starting point for clinical trainees about to specialize in andrology or in reproductive medicine.

Since the first edition of this book was published some 5 years ago, andrology has become a more visible and topical area of medicine. There have been several causes for this, not least the continuing success of assisted reproduction techniques such as intracytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI). However, this very success has had the hidden danger that it can distort the perceived need for a thorough work-up of such patients. The authors of this book have probably played a big role as anyone in highlighting the shortcomings of such an approach, which have undoubtedly contributed to the rather poor progress made in our understanding of the causes of male infertility. The need for a thorough work-up of the patient, and in particular the need to search for the underlying cause of the disorder, for which there has to be a high...
level of understanding of the basic workings of the male reproductive system, shine through in this book.

There are three introductory chapters on the definition and goals of andrology, comparative reproductive biology and an excellent chapter on the physiology of testicular function. These serve as a springboard for the following seven chapters that deal systematically with the evaluation and diagnosis of patients presenting with andrological problems – these chapters are up to date as well as being comprehensive and highly readable. The following three chapters deal with andrological issues arising secondarily from systemic diseases, environmental influences on male reproductive health (another topical issue) and the relevance of gynaecological disorders to evaluation of the male. Then follows four chapters dealing with therapeutic possibilities of testosterone therapy (a particular strongpoint of the book’s editors), treatment of idiopathic infertility, assisted fertilization and semen cryopreservation. Finally, to make the book well-rounded, there are four chapters on the psychology of infertility, male contraception, the ageing male and the ethical aspects of reproductive medicine. The latter three chapters could well present the face of andrology that will attract the greatest attention in the coming years and they present a very balanced and informative read.

With the spectre of male germ cell transplantation on the horizon and the growing emergence of the issue of hormone replacement in an increasingly ageing male population, andrology is set to assume an ever higher public profile. To face such issues, we all need to be cool-minded and armed with facts and a clear understanding. This book provides this necessary support in a highly readable format. The authors and editors are to be congratulated on their achievement.

Dr Richard M Sharpe