**Book Reviews**

**Parasitic Infections in the Compromised Host.** Edited by Peter D. Walzer and Robert M. Genta. New York, Marcel Dekker Inc., 1989. 533 pp. $125.00.

This is the introductory volume in an annual series on infectious disease and therapy, edited by Brian E. Scully and Harold C. Neu. This first volume addresses diseases caused by the parasitic organisms of major clinical importance in the United States, with an emphasis on infections in immunocompromised hosts. The book does not address the clinical aspects of parasitic infections seen in primary care medicine and therefore does not supplant a standard textbook of clinical parasitology; its intent is neither a broad overview of diseases caused by these parasites in normal hosts, nor the range of parasites which cause infection in immunocompromised hosts. The advantage of this tightly focused objective is the comprehensive discussion of the relatively few but important parasites which cause opportunistic infection in hosts with altered immunity, specifically due to congenital immunodeficiency, immunosuppressive chemotherapy for treatment of neoplasms, immunoregulation for organ transplantation or infection with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).

The thirteen chapter authors of this volume are all contributors in their fields of research. The chapters can be divided conceptually into two groups—three chapters which principally address the host and the immune response to parasitic infections, and six chapters which focus on individual organisms. An introductory chapter discusses the spectrum of conditions which compromise the human host, emphasizing distinctions between patient populations and the differential predisposition of different immune defects to different opportunistic infections. The second chapter uses Leishmania as model organism to discuss host defenses against intracellular protozoa but does not specifically address clinical leishmaniasis. A later chapter similarly addresses the host immune response against helminth parasitic infection. The remaining six chapters each discuss a single parasite: the protozoa Pneumocystis carinii, Toxoplasma gondii, Cryptosporidium spp., Giardia lamblia, Entamoeba histolytica, and the helminth Strongyloides stercoralis. These chapters uniformly provide a comprehensive yet coherent perspective on the biology of the parasite, its interaction with the host and the immune system, the clinical manifestation of disease, and the diagnosis and treatment of infection. Each of the sections is thoroughly detailed and complete. The sections on diagnosis and treatment would be of special interest to physicians; current treatment regimens are discussed, as well as promising new modes of therapy. Discussion of parasitic infections in the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) is included, but does not dominate the volume.

A suitable number of diagrams, figures, and tables accompany each chapter. The photomicrographs, electron micrographs, and illustrations are all high-quality reproductions. Topics are extensively referenced to the current literature, with an average of over 250 references per chapter.

Given the aggressive therapies, both recently employed and projected, for immunoregulation in organ transplant recipients and as part of the therapy for other medical illnesses, discussion of opportunistic parasitic infection is timely. This timeliness is
accentuated by the importance of many of these infections in patients with AIDS. The amalgamation of knowledge of parasite biology with clinical aspects of disease and treatment of infection is an especially strong feature of the book. This volume is appropriate and highly recommended for clinical microbiologists and research scientists in these fields of study, and for physicians, such as immunologists and infectious diseases specialists, who participate in the treatment of immunocompromised patients, including patients with AIDS.

HAL B. JENSON

_Departments of Pediatrics and Epidemiology and Public Health_  
_Yale University School of Medicine_

**INTENSIVE CARE: FACING THE CRITICAL CHOICES.** By Thomas A. Raffin, Joel Shurkin, and Wharton Sinkler III. New York, W.H. Freeman and Co., 1988. 210 pp. $14.95.

*Intensive Care*, an educational book written for a wide non-medical audience, is specifically addressed to families and patients who are thrust into the frightening environment of an intensive care unit (ICU). The authors explain what happens when organ systems fail and the limitations of technology's ability to prolong life. These explanations lay the foundation for the discussion of difficult ethical and social issues.

The book begins with a brief historical account of the development of intensive care units. Next, each of the major organ systems (heart, lungs, kidneys, liver, and central nervous system) is systematically considered. Included are descriptions of how each system functions, disorders related to each system, and of the technology available for the management of organ failure. The authors depict typical case studies, which include a woman with a myocardial infarction, a young man with AIDS and respiratory failure, and a young woman with irreversible brain damage. These cases are followed by discussions of basic physiology and explanations of specific intensive care interventions, protocols, and procedures. The functions of ventilators, dialysis machines, and cardiac monitors are carefully explained, and the authors give the reader an accurate description of the nature of the activities of the intensive care unit.

The cases of the individual patients discussed are varied. Some the patients recover quickly, others recover after many months of intensive therapy, and others die despite receiving the most advanced medical care available. The cases provide a background for discussion about life and death, the meaning of brain death, and of settings in which dying becomes more natural than living. The roles physicians play and the importance of effective communication are well outlined. Delicate issues such as "Do Not Resuscitate" orders and ICU psychosis are carefully explained. The meaning of "extraordinary care" is explained with regard to individual patients.

Legal issues are examined by using well-known cases such as those of Baby Jane Doe and Karen Quinlan. The text discusses economic issues related to the provision of catastrophic health care while simultaneously giving a historical view of the development of health insurance and DRGs. The authors point out that the greatest health expenditures often occur during the last few weeks of a person's life. The book ends with a chapter on "when it happens to you," which emphasizes the importance of communication between doctors, patients, and the patient's family and friends.

*Intensive Care* is remarkably thorough and complete. It is easy to read, and the entire book can be finished in several hours. The sections on the various organ systems