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book reviews

Sherlock's disease of the liver and biliary systems, 12th edn

Edited by James S Dooley, Anna Lok, Andrew Burroughs, Jenny Heathcote. Wiley Blackwell, Oxford 2011. 792 pp. £130.00.

One naturally mourns for the singlehanded authority of the late Sheila Sherlock in her famous textbook. But one has to accept that the extraordinary growth of hepatology since then demanded a greater pool of contributing expertise. James Dooley, who co-authored the last three editions of the textbook with Sheila, has brought in three additional editors for this new 12th edition – Anna Lok from the USA, Andrew Burroughs from the UK and Jenny Heathcote from Canada. They have overseen a large team of outstanding experts covering the whole specialty as it is today. Many of the contributors were trained or had worked with Sheila at different times and coming, as it were, from the same mould have maintained that didactic approach of presentation that brought the book such success over its 50 years of existence. ‘An accurate source to relevant information from students to specialist physicians’ is how it is described in the preface of this new volume.

The clarity of figures and tables has always been a hallmark of the book and the production team at Wiley-Blackwell is to be

congratulated on the standards obtained. The superb artwork evident in the first chapter by J Lefkowitz on anatomy and function is as exciting as is the text. In fact, whichever chapter one dips into one wants to continue reading. It is invidious to isolate chapters. One on hepatic fibrogenesis by Scott Freidman, for example, makes light of scientific complexities and is truly informative. Those by Andrew Burroughs on portal hypertension, Marsha Morgan's on encephalopathy, Jenny Heathcote's on autoimmune disease and Anna Lok's on hepatitis B, and the editors' own contributions, are outstanding authoritative accounts, reflecting the vast clinical experience, as well as research, contributions in these areas.

There are useful contributions on special topics including the liver and systemic disease, and the liver in pregnancy which will prove useful to clinicians facing individual clinical problems. The hepatic transplantation chapter has been extended, reflecting the importance of this form of therapy in current hepatological practice.

James Dooley is to be congratulated on his courage and dedication along with his clearly inspiring leadership to contributing authors, and he has not allowed Sheila's volume to die with her passing. The hepatology world has been given a thoroughly up-to-date, exciting and cleverly produced volume which competitors will have the greatest difficulty in matching.

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