

BOOK REVIEWS

Text Atlas of Wound Management by Vincent Falanga. 2000. 310 pages, 540 figures. ISBN 1-85317-471-8. Hardcover. Price US\$115. Martin Dunitz, Oxford, UK.

The contributions to this multi-author work have been written and edited by experts in the field of wounds and wound-healing. It is an informal presentation of cases and provides some clinical information and comments about pathogenesis. A pictorial guide to wound management, it is intended for a broad readership, ranging from students to clinicians just starting out to professionals needing a pictorial reference. The book is varied and deals with all types of acute and chronic ulcers – non-surgical injury wounds, wounds caused by lasers and scalpels, infections, pressure sores and neuropathic ulcers, vascular ulcers, wounds as a result of inflammatory processes, and neoplasms.

Richly illustrated, this book is easy to read and digest, and provides many useful ideas about the management of wounds. It can certainly be recommended, as the authors intended, to a wide range of interested professionals, clinicians and students.

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Allergy and Allergic Diseases: with a View of the Future, ed. by A. B. Kay. 2001. ISBN 1-85315-459-8. Price £34.95. The Royal Society of Medicine Press Ltd. Paperback. 265 pages. Oxford University Press, Great Clarendon Street, Oxford OX2 6DP, UK (fax. +44 (0) 1865 267 907; e-mail: jnl.orders@oup.co.uk). Price for single issues £24.95/US\$41 – excl. postage.

The editor of this volume, Professor A. B. Kay, has asked a group of clinicians and basic researchers – all actively engaged within research related to allergy and allergic diseases – to present various aspects of this important topic in short overviews. The capacities of the authors behind each overview are impressive, and for anyone interested in having access to good reviews with relevant references within allergy, this is indeed an interesting book.

It is not a homogeneous presentation of “allergy and allergic diseases”. The focus is clearly on asthma and IgE mechanisms; nothing else except an informative review on food anaphylaxis. As a dermatologist, you are disappointed that the “first atopic disease”, atopic eczema, is hardly mentioned. It is disappointing because atopic eczema, with its extrinsic (atopic) versus intrinsic (non-atopic) forms, is provocative for our understanding of diseases which we call “allergic” or “atopic”. Contact dermatitis is mentioned by Professor Kay only in the

introductory chapter – although allergic contact dermatitis can be used as an “allergic disease without atopy”. Thus, issues regarding classification of ‘allergic diseases’ are not sufficiently highlighted, while antigen-specific reactions are the focus, and this in relation to IgE.

What is written about IgE is impressive – from the knowledge on isotype switching of immunoglobulins and the production of IgE, to IgE-receptor interactions and the description of the crystal structure of the IgE-Fc-epsilon-R1 complex – opening the way for development of low-weight molecules that can disturb interactions with the receptor.

As a clinician, it is useful to learn of the detailed knowledge basic researchers have compiled on immunoglobulin development and the molecular aspects of T-cell differentiation with special emphasis on how Th-1 and Th-2 cells develop. This well-written chapter alone is worth the price of the book. True, it concerns normal cells, but it will help us to understand where and how it goes “wrong” so a genetically predisposed person becomes a patient with an allergic disease.

I miss a chapter on “organ-homing” of lymphocytes and other cell types present in allergic disease with reference to the knowledge within mice of “organ-homing” (subclasses of T lymphocytes homing to various organs depending on their T-cell receptors). Although little is known today in humans, it is clear that there must be mechanisms behind “skin-homing” leading to atopic eczema with later occurrence in life of lymphocytes expressing “lung-homing” leading to asthma.

This book is not aimed at the physician who wants to concentrate on therapy of patients with allergic diseases. Still, there is a very interesting chapter on “Heterogeneity of therapeutic responses in asthma”, showing how polymorphisms influence the outcome of certain new therapeutic agents.

The book is highly recommend to young researchers going into the field of allergy and, in particular, in asthma. Here, the book is a must. It is also recommended to anyone interested in allergy, as many chapters give critical reviews of the current status – this is especially true for environmental factors, immunotherapy, future treatments and allergen avoidance. Each chapter can be read on its own. The book is “value for money”.

Allergy and allergic disease is a fast-moving field within medicine. This book has value for the next couple of years, when it is hoped that the Royal Society of Medicine, which is behind the British Medical Bulletin series, will take a further look at what is going on in allergy.

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