BOOK REVIEWS

International Advances in Surgical Oncology - Vol. 6. G.P. MURPHY, New York, Alan R. Liss, Inc., 374 pp, 1983, £58.

Unlike most book series of this genre, the readership would appear at first to be readily identified as specialists claiming to be surgical oncologists; but in this country it is still arguable whether such a specialty exists in its own right. (The controversy as to whether Britain is in fact 40 years behind the United States of America in the field of surgical oncology is currently being debated within the columns of the British Medical Journal). This volume highlights the dilemma. Of the dozen or so chapters, two would appeal to the head and neck surgeons, two to the gynaecologists, two to the general surgeons, one to the thoracic surgeons and one to the urologists. Does an individual surgeon in this country deal with cancer of the head and neck, cancer of the cervix and bronchogenic cancer as well as dealing with the gastrointestinal malignancies? If not, there is no appropriate readership for this book.

My other major criticism is the solipsist view of the subject, characteristic of American volumes, which goes beyond the simple avoidance of citations of European contributions to oncology in expressing a peculiarly American attitude to a number of the subjects covered. For example, cytoreductive surgery for various advanced cancers has theoretical attractions so far untested scientifically, and yet is expressed as an article of faith in a number of areas of this book. The chapter by Letton, entitled "Improved Survival by Routine Screening for Breast Cancer", is again quite extraordinary in its North American uncritical acceptance of routine screening. The author starts out with the extraordinary dogmatic statement, that as the mortality from breast cancer is static in the United States of America and the incidence of the disease is increasing, therefore more women are being cured than previously, completely ignoring the fact that as yet no therapeutic trial has demonstrated improved survival with one treatment compared with another. By concentrating on the experience of the uncontrolled study entitled Breast Cancer Demonstration and Detection Project (BCDDP), the subject becomes very confusing and yet the author, having convinced himself that screening saves lives, then agrees that the national programme is too expensive and screening should be restricted to high risk groups only. Included amongst the high risk groups are those women who intuitively believe they will develop breast cancer! Yet there is absolutely no evidence forthcoming

that screening of high risk groups only will save lives.

The chapter I found particularly interesting was by Takita, reviewing the evidence in favour of specific and non-specific immunotherapy after potentially curative resection of squamous cell carcinoma of the lung. The evidence produced that immunotherapy does improve survival for this lethal disease is rather convincing, yet if this is the case, why is such therapy not freely used in this country? Either there is something wrong with the evidence that I have been unable to pick up or the Atlantic Divide has for once inhibited the translocation of a useful therapeutic advance.

At £58 I think this book is of far too little use to be recommended for surgeons with an interest in cancer, particularly as all relevant sections will have been covered by reading the original papers in the specialist journals where they first appeared. For example, the one British contribution by Keighley *et al.* on Techniques for bowel preparation prior to colonic resection will surely have been read by all British gastroenterology surgeons in the pages of the British Journal of Surgery.

In conclusion, therefore, yet another profit-making title for the publishers and an expensive addition for libraries at a time of economic recession, of little value for practising surgeons.

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Beneficial Effects of Endotoxins. ALOIS NOWOTNY, USA, Plenum Press, xiii + 581 pp, 1983, £69.50.

A. Nowotny, a major contributor to the field, has put together a most valuable monograph. While multi-authored, it covers the field clearly, authoritatively and comprehensively because of effective editing. The effects of endotoxin on non-specific resistance to infection, on blood clotting, on antibody production and cell mediated immunity and on the release of lymphokines, including interferon, are described. This multiplicity of biological effects evoked by endotoxin makes it unlikely that there is a simple mechanism responsible for its anti-tumour activity and its effect on the radiosensitivity of mammals. For the whole of the century, cancer researchers have been fascinated by the occasional, spectacular regression of large tumour masses, first observed in man by

Coley and replicated in animal models, including primary as well as transplanted tumours, by Andervant, who showed that an important component of this effect was the destruction of the blood supply of the tumours by haemorrhagic necrosis. That this effect on newly formed blood vessels is not the only mechanism by which endotoxin can affect the growth of malignant cells is clearly shown by its action on ascitic cancers and leukaemias. This diversity of anti-tumour activities of endotoxin makes it obligatory to consider an involvement of endotoxins when a natural product produces an anti-tumour action and especially if it causes the rapid regression of large tumour masses. Endotoxin activity can be introduced accidentally in

a large variety of ways, even when procedures are sterile; dead bacteria have endotoxin. For example, the use of the bacterial product protein A to concentrate immunoglobins introduces the risk of endotoxin contamination.

This book should be read not only by workers who are deliberately studying endotoxin, but by all who are investigating the anti-tumour or immuno modulating effects of proteins and products derived from micro-organisms.

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Other Books Received

Palliative Care: The Management of Far Advanced Illness. Ed: Derek Doyle. Croom Helm Limited – London (1983). £25.00 (viii+536) pages. ISBN 0 7099 0836 9.

Tumours of the Soft Tissues. Author: T.K. Das Gupta. Prentice/Hall International UK – (1983). £88.85. 681 pages. ISBN 0 8385 9045 4.

Tumour Viruses and Differentiation. – UCLA Symposia on Molecular and Cellular Biology/New Series, Vol 5. Eds: E.M. Scolnick and A.J. Levine. Alan E. Liss, Inc – New York (1983). £67.00. 476 pages. ISBN 0 8451 2604 0.

Controlled Clinical Trials in Urologic Oncology – European Organization for Research on Treatment of Cancer (EORTC) Monograph Series, Vol 13. Eds: L. Denis, G.P. Murphy, G.R. Prout and F. Schroder. Raven Press – New York (1984). Price not given. 329 pages. ISBN 0 89004 152 0.

Atlas of Cancer Mortality in England and Wales 1968–1978. Authors: M.J. Gardner, P.D. Winter, C.P. Taylor and E.D. Acheson. John Wiley & Sons – UK (1983). £35.00. (xi+116) pages. ISBN 0 471 90042 7.

Biochemical and Biological Markers of Neoplastic Transformation – NATO ASI Series/Series A: Life Sciences, Vol 57. Ed: P. Chandra. Plenum Publishing – USA (1983). £89.50. (xv+639) pages. ISBN 0 306 41240 3.

Molecular Aspects of Anti-Cancer Drug Action – Topics in Molecular and Structural Biology, 3. Eds: S. Neidle and M.J. Waring. Macmillan Press Ltd (1983). £45.00. (x+404) pages. ISBN 0 333 31556 1.

Basic and Clinical Tumour Immunology – Cancer Treatment and Research Series. Ed: R.B. Herberman. Martinus Nijhoff – The Netherlands (1983). \$72.00. 368 pages. ISBN 0 89838 579 2.

Oncology of the Nervous System – Cancer Treatment and Research Series. Ed: M.D. Walker. Martinus Nijhoff – The Netherlands (1983). \$69.50. 424 pages. ISBN 0 89838 567 9.

Supportive Care in Cancer Therapy – Cancer Treatment and Research Series. Ed: D.J. Higby. Martinus Nijhoff – The Netherlands (1983). \$80.00. 356 pages. ISBN 0 89838 569 5.

Controversies in the Management of Lymphomas (including Hodgkin's Disease) – Cancer Treatment and Research Series. Ed: J.M. Bennett. Martinus Nijhoff – The Netherlands (1983). \$59.50. 312 pages. ISBN 0 89838 586 5.

Soft Tissue Sarcomas – Cancer Treatment and Research Series. Ed: L.H. Baker. Martinus Nijhoff – The Netherlands (1983). \$36.00. 160 pages. ISBN 0 89838 584 9.

Commentaries on Research in Breast Disease – Vol 3. Eds: R.D. Bulbrook and D.J. Taylor. Alan R. Liss, Inc. – New York (1983). Price not given. (xiii+201) pages. ISBN 0 8451 1902 8.