Book Reviews


This is an altogether admirable account of bone tumours, and may be expected to be the standard work on the subject for many years to come. It contains a wealth of interesting and well documented material: despite this it is a compact and very readable volume.

Dr Jaffe is Director of Laboratories and Pathologist at the Hospital for Joint Diseases in New York, and, with various colleagues from his department, he has been responsible for many papers of outstanding importance on the pathology of bone tumours and related topics; readers of this journal are probably well aware of his work in this field, and of the numerous entities, such as osteoid osteoma, benign chondroblastoma and chondromyxoid fibroma, whose recognition we owe to him. But his original papers on bone tumours are scattered in a variety of medical journals over a period of many years, and it is not easy for most people to consult them: the present volume will bring to a wide audience a detailed, accurate and up-to-date account of his views on all types of bone and joint tumours. It is not a rehash of the original papers, but a systematic account of the whole subject incorporating a number of extensions of his previously published views.

Although Dr Jaffe is a pathologist, the book does not deal only with morbid anatomy and histopathology. Clinical and radiological findings pertaining to the various lesions are presented, and considerable emphasis is given to the correlation and integration of data from the three disciplines, both in defining the conditions concerned and in making individual diagnoses. Dr Jaffe stresses the need for the individual diagnostician—whether surgeon, radiologist or pathologist—to achieve, himself, this synthesis of approach: the book itself is a most outstanding demonstration of the high degree of synthesis that one man can, in fact, achieve.

Each of the main types of bone tumour is represented by a chapter, and in each chapter a standard treatment is adopted. First there is a section dealing with definition and nomenclature; then information is given on incidence, including age and sex incidence. Next come sections dealing with localisation in the skeleton, clinical presentation and radiological findings, followed by a detailed account of gross and microscopic pathology and a discussion of differential diagnosis. The overall emphasis of the book is, of course, on diagnosis, but each chapter is concluded with a brief section on treatment. The illustrations, which are outstanding, show the range of radiological appearances to be encountered in the condition under discussion, as well as features of gross and microscopic pathology. The illustrations are arranged and described so that the various preparations from an individual case—perhaps the radiograph, a photograph of the specimen, and photomicrographs—can readily be compared. With their descriptive legends, the illustrations virtually form an atlas of bone tumours.

One interesting point on which the book throws some light is Dr Jaffe's attitude to tumour classification in general. He thinks there is little to be gained by grouping together various types of bone tumour according to their supposed tissues of origin: he prefers to consider each type of lesion "as a clinicopathologic entity in its own right." It is possible that this approach leads him to give relatively little emphasis to those tumours which appear to "break the rules" and to possess histological features of more than one tumour type: at the same time it is just this approach that has led to such outstanding success in the delineation of criteria for all our important diagnostic groups.

The book will certainly help to raise the standard of diagnosis and treatment of bone and joint tumours wherever it is read. Whenever an interesting or unusual bone tumour is discussed, whether in the wards or the laboratories, a very pertinent question is now going to be "What does 'Jaffe' have to say about this type of lesion?"—H. A. SissonS.