

**Consumption Coagulopathies** A. Larcen, H. Lambert, A. Gérard. Masson Publishing USA Inc. 1987. pp 240. £60.00

One of the best things about this book is its title and indeed the discussion begins with a two-page explanation of the choice. Anyone writing about consumption coagulopathy is faced with a daunting task because of the protean nature of the condition, difficulties of definition and the lack of hard scientific information on how to treat the affected patients. As Professor Hardaway says in his introduction this is a very complete review of the field but after reading the work one is left with the sensation of being none the wiser.

The structure of the chapters begins with pathophysiology and progresses through clinical and laboratory findings to pathology and treatment but errors of translation and the failure always to transfer true meaning from French into English make the text hard to follow. There are so many tables and references that reading becomes a labour while the photographs tend

to be irrelevant and repetitive. The authors have succumbed to the temptation to tell us all there is to know about consumption coagulopathy without giving the clear opinions that would have been possible had a more selective approach been used. Thus the fact that placental abruption has been described following snake bite or consumption coagulopathy can follow dog bite or frost bite is of limited interest save to the most assiduous follower of case reports.

The value of this book lies in its comprehensive treatment of the subject and the details of the authors experience of the disorder and its management but whether many readers will be persuaded to buy it at the quoted price is doubtful. In the historical introduction Hamlet's father is added to the list of possible victims of consumption coagulopathy due to 'the leperous distilment; whose effect holds such an enmity with blood of man'. Four hundred years later and despite all the effort that has been devoted to this volume the problems are still largely unsolved.

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