

BOOK REVIEWS

KURTSIN, I. T., *Effects of Ionizing Radiation of the Digestive System*, New York, American Elsevier Publishing Company, Inc., 1963, \$16.00, 276 pages, 27 pages of references, indexed, 72 illustrations, 68 tables.

The publishers blurb for EFFECTS OF IONIZING RADIATION ON THE DIGESTIVE SYSTEM states “. . . a practical outline of the prevention and treatment of serious radiation injury to the digestive organs is not neglected, and many references are included.” The words “prevention” and “treatment” and related words are not included in the index. I went through the text, page by page and could find no references to them. The reference list is long (mostly Russian articles) and I could not check them. However, the misleading blurb and a preliminary “note” (by the author?) is sufficient to confine the book to the waste basket; but this might not be the fault of the author.

Dr. Kurtsin reviews the history of digestive-system radiation damage, in a short introduction, differently from the way I have been taught the literature. Many of the articles quoted are articles I recognized as having little or nothing to do with the digestive system, and some that I recognized are not even secondary references. There is a puzzling reference to “*gastric paresis*” during the first 24 hours of the chronic course of a disease. I am not sure what the first 24 hours of a chronic course is. There are references to “*signs of central nervous system, functional disorders*” at doses “*occasionally at five to ten times above maximum permissible levels.*” Most of the book is a description of the authors “team of scientists” work on prolonged chronic experiments on 100 dogs. There is a great talk in the foreword on using both dose and dose rate. The body of the text makes little reference to dose rate except in the most general terms. A good indication of the direction of the work described is in the foreword, “*this research has been conducted in conformity with the general theory of I. P. Pavlov on higher nervous activity and the teaching of K. M. Dykov on functional interrelations between the cerebral cortex and the internal organs.*” This is different from the American radiobiological tradition of conducting all work in conformity with the blood stream and bone marrow.

All the basic functions of the digestive system—secretion, motility, and absorption—are said to be damaged by radiation (various doses and dose rates—various digestive-system functions). Apparently the clinical summary referred to by the author in the foreword is contained in the last chapter, which very briefly states that “*a detailed analysis of the function of an organ is important . . . a major element in diagnosing radiation injury to the digestive function is the composition of the secretion . . . a clinical appraisal of the digestive disorders, then, must take into account all the signs of radiation sickness . . .*” The statement on therapy is included in the last paragraph of the book “. . . must be based on the individual approach . . . should include combined measures aimed at overcoming the pathological phenomena both in the digestive system proper and in the higher divisions of the central nervous system regulating its activity.” The book might be of interest to radiobiologists who are surfeited by the haematological and DNA fads. It is of almost no value to physicians.

M. B.

LEBEDINSKIY, A. V. AND NAKHIL'NITSKAYA, Z. N., *Effects of Ionizing Radiation on the Nervous System*, New York, American Elsevier Publishing Company, Inc., \$12.50, indexed, 154 pages, 39 pages of references, 44 illustrations, 5 tables.

This book on effects on the nervous system should be of greater interest to scientific historians than to radiobiologists. According to Lebedinsky and Nakhil'nitskaya “. . . before and after the turn of the century, radiobiology was almost entirely concerned with the discovery