THE INTERPRETATION OF THE UNIPOLAR ELECTROCARDIOGRAM—Gordon B. Myers, M.D., Professor of Medicine, Wayne University College of Medicine, The C. V. Mosby Company, St. Louis, 1956. 164 pages, $4.75.

This manual represents a carefully edited compilation of lecture material the author has used for a number of years as part of a postgraduate course in electrocardiography and it follows that emphasis is laid on a stepwise didactic approach. It is expanded under five major headings which include consideration of the basic electrical phenomena and their relation to the electrocardiographic deflections; procedure for interpretation; an analysis of QRS-T in normal and abnormal tracings; disorders involving rate and rhythm and a final summary of QRS-T patterns. Since the standard limb leads are not discussed, the physical considerations are held to a direct, uncomplicated minimum which are, however, wholly adequate to explain the electrical events described. The author begins by defining all portions of the electrocardiogram and what each represents, together with a description of how to evaluate the technical aspects of the record. Thus, as they subsequently encounter the chapter on the origin and form of the QRS-T, the illustrations may be fairly easily read even by those relatively inexperienced in electrocardiographic interpretation. A series of schematic drawings of the heart illustrate time-sequence relationships as they correlate the direction and spread of electrical activity as well as its speed and duration with sequential electrocardiographic records at progressive time intervals. This technic is extensively and successfully exploited to give the reader a strong sense of the dynamism involved in the electrocardiographic tracing. The author then assembles all of the previously described phenomena in a final chapter of readily usable summary.

The Manual has the advantages of simplicity, lucidity and thoroughness, and has been arranged by a teacher with large experience in the field and one who is clearly responsive to the needs of his students. One would wish however, to see mention made of the cardiographic findings in pulmonary embolism and more adequate discussion of the value of voltage measurements in ventricular hypertrophy. Additionally, this reviewer feels the large pages and processed, typewriter-like printing makes for reader fatigue. A more serious drawback, and one which contributes further to reader fatigue, is the absence of illustrative tracings to accompany the abnormal conditions under discussion. Even though this manual was intended to be produced inexpensively, it fails to a degree in its purpose as a teaching instrument by this omission. In the same vein, a pertinent bibliography would enhance further its value and would hardly add significantly to its cost.

Despite the above comments, the authoritative discussion by such an experienced man as Dr. Myers, makes this manual a valuable addition to the field of cardiology.

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ELECTROCARDIOGRAPHY—Fundamentals and Clinical Application—Second Edition—Louis Wolff, M.D., Visiting Physician, Consultant in Cardiology and Chief of the Electrocardiographic Laboratory, Beth Israel Hospital; Assistant Clinical Professor of Medicine, Harvard Medical School. W. B. Saunders Company, Philadelphia, 1956. 342 pages, 199 illustrations, $7.00.

Wolff's book is a significant contribution and will be warmly welcomed by physicians interested in learning electrocardiography. The second edition is considerably expanded over the first one and has major changes. A section on arrhythmias and rewriting of the text to emphasize a knowledge of the spatial orientation of the cardiac vector contributes to an understanding of the electrocardiogram. The author is interested in avoiding a purely empiric interpretation of the electrocardiogram and his combination of vector analysis with electrocardiographic interpretation clarifies the subject considerably. The author is a man who has had wide experience in his field and a good many clinical correlations are scattered through the text.

The strongest chapters include the introductory ones on electrophysiology and electrical axis, the discussion of myocardial infarction, ventricular hypertrophy, and bundle branch block.

The sections on electrolyte imbalance, pericarditis, and pulmonary embolism are relatively sketchy, although the basic data is presented. These sections could be more comprehensive; for example, acute pericarditis is illustrated by only one electrocardiogram and no serial tracings are shown and the total discussion covers only 2½ pages. The section on the arrhythmias is compact but relatively brief so that variations of the ordinary rhythms could not be discussed in detail; for example, the text on premature beats is approximately 3½ pages. The text on atrial ventricular block, exclusive of the figures and clinical data, also was quite brief.

The book can be highly recommended because of its strong sections and because of its vector orientation. The text is lucid, the illustrations are clear, and the electrocardiograms shown are typical and well described.

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HISTAMINE — Ciba Foundation Symposium — Editors: G. E. W. Wolstenholme and Cecilia M. O'Connor. Little, Brown and Company, Boston, 1956. 472 pages, $9.00.

This book is another in the series of important publications of conferences sponsored by the CIBA Foundation. It is somewhat unusual in that it consists of reports of two conferences in a single volume: The Symposium of the Physiological and Pharmacological Societies at the Wellcome Foundation and a Symposium held at the CIBA Foundation. The participants at the conferences include distinguished pharmacologists and physiologists, as well as clinicians, from the Americas, from England and from Continental Europe. The presentations at both conferences consisted of some of moderate length on highly specialized and technically treated aspects of the histamine problem, as well as short reports on minor aspects. The groups of discussions are followed by a detailed and complete summary of the discussion that occurred following each group of presentations.

Scientific findings that are presented are important ones from the point of view of fundamental physiology and pharmacology, but much of the material is not of immediate concern to the practicing physician. It is apparent that medicine talks much and does much about histamine without understanding clearly its mechanism of production, release and destruction, for if these distinguished investigators are relatively humble about their knowledge so should necessarily be the practicing physician.

Those with good background should profit much from this book; it is not a source which will at the same time supply background and bring the novice up to date.

With respect to the use of antihistaminic drugs, a short report by J. J. Reuse from the University of Brussels is of interest. Antihistaminics act strongly to block the effects of endogenous histamine, but doses must be much higher to counter the effects of histamine of endogenous origin, particularly that released by certain antigens. This may shed some light on the irregular responses noted under clinical conditions.

In summary, this book is likely to be of much value to physiologists and pharmacologists, a source of guilt-feelings to the allergist, and of relatively little interest to practicing physicians.