Book reviews

A Practical Guide to Pediatric Intensive Care. 2nd ed. Edited by D L Levin, F C Moriss, G C Moore. Pp 688; £29.00 paperback. C V Mosby and Co, (Blackwell Scientific), 1984.

The second edition of *A Practical Guide to Pediatric Intensive Care* is a multiauthor, American work which provides practical advice on the management of seriously ill patients in a readable and easily assimilated format. The authors have recognised that successful management of critically ill patients depends on a clear understanding of physiology and have therefore attempted to provide sufficient detail of the physiology and pathology of the various conditions to allow treatment to be applied rationally and adjusted according to changing situations.

The book is divided into three main sections. Part one is an approach to the major problems presenting to intensive care units and is based on the organ system affected rather than on the initiating disease process. This system orientated approach has been adopted because most patients present with symptoms and signs of organ failure which require immediate management, often before the causative disease is known. This section contains concise, lucid, but often quite comprehensive accounts of all the major problems likely to be encountered—altered consciousness, raised intracranial pressure, shock, acute respiratory failure, fluid and electrolyte derangements, disseminated intravascular coagulation, and many others. The emphasis in each of these chapters is on the pathophysiology of the disorder, the major diagnostic possibilities, the investigations and monitoring required, and the principles of management. The discussions are very readable and up to date, and each chapter is followed by a short bibliography which provides a useful guide to further reading. Part one is intended to be read in advance to provide a background to the more specific recommendations given in the subsequent sections.

Part two covers the individual disorders presenting to an intensive care unit, with an emphasis on the immediate priorities for recognition, monitoring, and treatment. The list of topics covered is very extensive

including all common problems such as meningitis, septicaemia, croup, asthma, and diabetic ketoacidosis, as well as rarer ones such as Reye's syndrome, myasthenia gravis, and the toxic shock syndrome. There are also sections on poisoning, surgical conditions, and sensitively handled discussions on sudden infant death and child abuse. The chapters in part two can be referred to in an emergency, and give succinct instructions on how to recognise, investigate, monitor, and treat the condition. The recommendations are accurate, sensible, and up to date.

The final section of the book is devoted to equipment and procedures used on an intensive care unit. Included are discussions on the layout of an intensive care unit, pressure transducers, venous and arterial catheters, and ventilators. There are also descriptions of practical procedures such as peritoneal dialysis, insertion of central lines, and thoraco-centesis. As with the other sections, the information in part three is concise, clearly written, and well illustrated.

The book is reasonably priced, and has been improved and expanded since the first edition. It is the best book currently available on the management of seriously ill patients, and it should be read and referred to not only by those working on an intensive care unit, but by all involved in caring for seriously ill patients. It will provide the inexperienced house officer with an understanding of the disorders, and a quick reference for coping with the immediate problems. There will be few experienced paediatricians who will not find it a source of new information, and a useful reference book.

Many of the recommendations for invasive monitoring may seem over aggressive to most British paediatricians. If this is so, it perhaps reflects how far British paediatric intensive care lags behind what is current practice in the USA. As the authors state, many salvageable patients who are critically ill are lost by a timid approach to management and monitoring in the early phases of the illness. It is also true that harm to patients may occur because of injudicious use of invasive monitoring and treatment. On the whole, the advice given in this book is balanced

and well thought out, and will give British paediatric intensive care units an idea of what is current practice in the USA.

M LEVIN

Progress in Child Health. Volume 1. Edited by J A MacFarlane. Pp 266; £12.00 paperback. Churchill Livingstone, 1984.

For doctors and other professionals working in the field of child health, relevant research material is scattered widely throughout the published reports. In this, the first of an annual series, recent ideas and research findings are collected into a concise and readable volume. The book contains 20 chapters, each a brief and separate review, on aspects of clinical and developmental paediatrics, preventive medicine, psychology, social paediatrics, sociology, and the child health service. The authors, predominantly British, are actively involved in research in their respective fields.

Selected topics range widely and include the epidemiology and diagnosis of late walking, outcome studies of squint treatment, and a detailed review of defective colour vision with implications for education and employment. The section on child abuse includes sexual abuse and the one on whooping cough immunisation, a review of international practice.

Dr Spencer should stimulate discussion with his thoughtful paper on the parents' recognition of illness in their child. Other chapters which attracted my attention were two by Michael Yogman on the importance and competence of fathers in relation to their children and those on the 'Myths of Bonding' and 'Children and Divorce'.

Inevitably, the need for new and imaginative ideas in the child health service is stressed in the Nottingham approach to those services in the deprived inner city and in the reviews of health clinic practice and school medicine.

The final chapters are devoted to screening and include an enlightening review of Swedish theory and practice.

This volume deserves to be popular with paediatricians as well as general practitioners, health visitors, clinical medical officers, and school nurses. The text is of a high