Book reviews

Essential Allergy. By N Mygind. Pp 480: £16.50 paperback. Blackwell Scientific, 1986.

There is no shortage of books on allergy. The standard multi-author volumes (often American) tend to be good encyclopaedias but fail to give practical advice. 'Essential Allergy', however, is a landmark not only in the field of allergy but also in setting a new standard for clarity of writing and presentation. The innovative format of this book could well be applied to many other medical topics.

There are 107 short mini chapters. Potentially awkward subjects, most notably immunological mechanisms, are presented in beautifully lucid small and easily digestible parts. The layout, diagrams, illustrations, and tables are models of clarity. The author has selected key references, given a short description of the content, and added his own helpful and critical remarks. These references appear in small print near the end of the chapter, and each chapter concludes with a summary. This structure means that the book will be useful to the student and specialist alike, for it can be read at different levels. I found it particularly useful to be able to refer to key research and clinical studies that form the basis for current knowledge and practice.

The content is as original as the layout. The mini chapters are divided into 12 sections, on basic immunology, allergen sources, the diagnosis of allergy, gastrointestinal reactions and food allergy, rhinitis, eye disease, skin disease, environmental control and immunotherapy, systemic allergic reactions, two sections on asthma, and one on other lung diseases. Throughout are numerous difficult areas and practical problems that have never really been well described before. In particular, the book covers *all* the practical aspects of treatment of atopic disease. The author discusses every form of treatment, so that antihistamines, bronchodilators, corticosteroids, allergen avoidance, and hyposensitisation are all fully discussed. The author's balanced but critical approach is an invaluable ingredient. Thus, to take one of many possible examples, the doctor looking for guidance on how to treat atopic eczema will find a particularly good account of

topical treatment as well as clear and balanced advice on the role of elimination diets and allergen avoidance. Indeed, the book is worth having just for its excellent description of the standard medical treatment of asthma, eczema, rhinitis, urticaria, and allergic conjunctivitis, all of which are more clearly presented here than in most paediatric textbooks.

This magnificent book totally succeeds in its aim of being suitable for the student, postgraduate, and specialist alike. It is easy and enjoyable to read and is reasonably priced. I think it will also interest those who in the past have been put off by the indigestible nature of immunology and the hopelessly anecdotal nature of much current allergy practice. One subject not covered in this book is drug allergy. The difficulty of getting sound practical advice from colleagues on this complex topic is matched by a dearth of useful publications.

T H DAVID

Pediatric Respiratory Therapy. 3rd ed. By M D Lough, C F Doershuk, R C Stern. Pp 300: £28.50 hardback. Blackwell Scientific Publications, 1985.

The subject matter of this book ranges from the development of the respiratory system through various theoretical and practical aspects of neonatal and non-neonatal respiratory care to an analysis of the importance of pulmonary function and exercise tests. This is the third edition (the first was produced in 1973) and the considerable clarity of the text reflects this. The style is North American and the text appears to be specifically designed for paediatric respiratory therapists, who do not exist as a single entity on this side of the Atlantic. The authors attribute a considerable portion of the improvement in paediatric respiratory care in North America to the formal organisation of respiratory therapy services around such a person. It is an intensely practical book with plans of management, checklists, flow charts, guides to help in the choice of equipment such as endotracheal tubes, and normal ranges for respiratory function tests. I particularly liked its large section on

mechanical ventilation. There are roughly 400 references and helpful suggestions with regard to further reading at the ends of the chapters. A modest index is present.

There are a few negative features. Mist therapy is advocated more enthusiastically than we would do in Britain. Details of instructions and equipment reflect the North American market from which the apparatus was purchased. There are occasional lapses from firm management plans as in the failure to advocate a definite plan in airway occlusion caused by a foreign body. Tuberculosis does not appear to be mentioned in the text or index.

This is a book that should take its place (for reference) in the paediatric respiratory ward or intensive care unit where the physiotherapist, nursing and physiological measurement technicians, as well as the junior medical staff would find its highly practical approach of considerable value. Perhaps the integration of practical paediatric respiratory therapy in the hands of an ancillary worker, as assumed in this text, might be usefully considered for the United Kingdom.

FLEMING CARSWELL

Lysosomal Storage Diseases: Biochemical and Clinical Aspects. By R W E Watts and D A E Gibbs. Pp 284: \$35.00 hardback. Taylor and Francis, 1986.

The biochemical background, classification, and presentation and clinical management of the lysosomal storage diseases represent areas of difficulty for the average practising paediatrician. The stated aim of the authors of this book is to give an up to date account of this major topic, and in this objective they have succeeded admirably. This is not a book to be purchased by every paediatrician in training nor indeed for the established paediatrician. It is, however, essential reading for anyone who is confronted with the practical management of a child suffering from a lysosomal storage disease.

In this book is to be found a concise review of the biochemical and genetic background to the disorders, which is then followed by detailed discussion of the