Book reviews


This is the 13th volume in a series on Pediatric and Adolescent Endocrinology. The editors have brought together contributions from several highly experienced authors to provide a successful, up to date account of adrenal disorders in children.

There are three sections entitled ‘Enzymatic defects of steroidogenesis’; ‘Adrenal insufficiency’; and ‘Disorders of adrenal regulation and secretion’. As expected, congenital adrenal hyperplasia accounts for more than half the content. Dr New introduces and reviews 21-hydroxylase deficiency, the most frequent cause of this disorder. Emphasis is placed on HLA linkage studies, heterozygote detection, screening, and the variation in phenotypic expression of the enzyme defect. She and her colleagues must take credit for their enormous contribution to our understanding of this condition in recent years. There is a comprehensive review of 11β-hydroxylase deficiency based on a large series of patients studied in Israel. Other, even rarer adrenal enzyme defects are each described in turn, but of necessity the information is anecdotal. In my view the editors should not have included 17.20 desmolase and 17β-hydroxysteroid dehydrogenase deficiencies, which are primarily disorders of gonadal steroidogenesis.

The association between autoimmune adrenal disease and other endocrinopathies is described clearly as is premature adrenarche (by Dr Pang), which is succinct and non-controversial. I was pleased to see reported the results of a questionnaire sent by Dr Korth-Schutz to members of the European Society for Paediatric Endocrinology on the difficult subject of childhood Cushing’s disease and syndrome, but would have preferred more clarity in some of the tabulated results. I am surprised there is no separate contribution on the assessment and management of steroid induced adrenal insufficiency. Nevertheless, the book is essential reading for paediatric endocrinologists even though the price is rather exorbitant. Biochemists, geneticists, and even adult endocrinologists will find this volume a valuable source of information.


Many paediatricians will spend a proportion of their time caring for physically disabled children and in doing so will work with other professionals who care for the child, in the child development centre or school. This book will help all those who care for such children and indeed all those professionals are represented as contributors to chapters. It is a very valuable book containing in one volume a profusion of advice and information previously scattered in journals, pamphlets, or textbooks. Consequently the book can serve as a source of reference and ideas on the methods of solving problems, in particular disabling conditions in individual children. It can also be read through with great profit to the paediatrician, who often has only incidental knowledge of what his colleague in orthopaedics, occupational or speech therapy, orthopaedic surgery, and orthotics is doing.

The book is written by the team at Chailey Heritage Hospital School and starts with a review of the young child with handicap. It continues with multi-author chapters on differing conditions: cerebral palsy, neuromuscular disorders, spina bifida, neurogenic bladder etc, and includes Chailey Heritage’s special expertise in limb deficiency and arthrogryposis.

The use of a number of authors for each chapter is unusual but is successful and the multidisciplinary view proceeds smoothly through each. There are helpful and instructive chapters on seating, wheelchair selection, orthotics, and communication aids, and the role of the rehabilitation engineer is included together with that of the educationalist and social worker. The scope of the book is completed by chapters on the problems of everyday living facing the adolescent and school leaver.

The book contains a wealth of detail and my only suggestion for a minor improvement in its content would be to include more practical advice on how to obtain (and pay for!) some of the various aids recommended.

Overall this is an admirable book. It is to be recommended thoroughly to each child development centre and school for physically disabled or mentally handicapped children, where all therapists, psychologists, and teachers will find it helpful. It may be of interest to parents, although it seems mainly directed at professionals. Any paediatrician or therapist dealing with physically disabled children should have a copy readily at hand.