Book reviews

Atlas of Neonatal Histopathology. By A. Moragas, A. Ballabriga, and M. T. Vidal; translated by A. and M. A. Valdes-Dapena. (Pp. 238; illustrated. £43.75, hardback.) Saunders: Philadelphia. 1977.

This book consists of 376 colour plates illustrating histological findings in neonatal deaths. The material presented is arranged according to organ system and each illustration is accompanied by a brief clinical description of the case and a discussion of the histological features. In some places the translators have added comments of their own. Most of the common conditions recognised in histology in the neonatal period are illustrated and a fair selection of rarities are included. The central nervous system is not very well covered: there are for instance no examples of ischaemic types of brain damage. The quality of the colour plates is variable and some are indistinct.

Despite the authors' preface stating the importance of correlating clinical and macroscopic pathological findings with histology, the production of an atlas of this type implies that neonatal pathological diagnosis is primarily dependent on histology. In fact the ability to make accurate macroscopic observations at post-mortem examination, to assess gestational age, the adequacy of growth, and those deviations from normal that call for further investigations, are far more important than knowing the characteristic histological features of particular conditions. There is only one opportunity to make the correct assessment macroscopically, but the slides will be available for as long as required. An atlas such as this cannot teach a general pathologist or paediatrician much about neonatal pathology. It represents purely a collection of histological pictures to compare with slides of one's own cases. As such it may prove of some limited value.

J. S. WIGGLESWORTH

Inherited Disorders of the Skeleton. Genetics in Medicine and Surgery Series. By Peter Beighton. (Pp. 267; illustrated + tables. £16.00 hardback.) Churchill Livingstone: Edinburgh. 1978.

This series of books is designed to provide doctors with easily accessible and authori-

tative information about the genetic aspects of their specialties. Professor Beighton has drawn his material from the 5-year period 1971-76 during which time he investigated more than 1000 patients with skeletal dysplasias and rare malformation syndromes in the genetic clinics of South Africa.

The generalised skeletal dysplasias are described, dividing them into those with and those without significant spinal involvement—an inevitable miscellaneous group—disorders with diminished and increased bone density, as well as the mucopolysaccharide disorders, mucopolysaccharidoses, and sphingolipidoses. Some of the rare craniofacial and vertebral malformation syndromes are included, as well as limb reduction defects and some digital anomalies. There are chapters on joint contracture syndromes and other connective tissue disorders such as the Marfan and Ehlers-Danlos syndromes, and a short final chapter on primary disturbances of growth such as pituitary and Russell-Silver dwarfism.

The title of the book is perhaps not quite accurate as mainly only rare and generalised disorders are included. The common skeletal defects are not mentioned, even though there may be a multifactorial or autosomal dominant pattern of inheritance (congenital dislocation of the hip, idiopathic talipes equino-varus and other foot deformities, tarsal coalition, neural tube defects, idiopathic scoliosis, spondylolysis). One of the best features is the list of references after each chapter; these are well chosen, up to date, and not oppressively plentiful.

It is assumed that the reader has a working knowledge of medical genetics and antenatal diagnosis, and Professor Beighton has concentrated on clinical and radiological features rather than on management and pathogenesis. The book is written from the standpoint of a clinical geneticist and paediatrician and it should prove a most helpful addition to their armamentarium.

RUTH WYNNE-DAVIES

Operative Surgery. Fundamental International Techniques: Paediatric Surgery. 3rd edition. Edited by H. Homewood

Nixon. (Pp. 489; illustrated. £42.00 hardback.) Butterworth: London. 1978.

The third edition of this series is the first to devote a volume to paediatric surgery. The editor has drawn on the expertise of 46 surgeons and the subtitle *Fundamental International Techniques* is fully justified. The surgery of childhood is comprehensively covered with chapters on herniae of all descriptions, congenital and acquired diseases of the alimentary tract, the liver and portal system, neoplasms, oesophageal and pulmonary surgery, endocrine surgery, and those aspects of neurosurgery, head and neck surgery, orthopaedics, and genitourinary surgery which the general surgeon may be called upon to deal with. The surgeon with a paediatric surgery commitment will find this book of value. Each chapter begins with a paragraph on the indications for the procedure and, in so doing, instructs the inexperienced in when as well as how to operate. The chapters on the commonly encountered surgical conditions of childhood are particularly well done. To the paediatric surgeon a volume of this type has two main uses. Firstly, as a source of information on an operation occasionally performed; by covering all aspects of paediatric surgery this requirement is fulfilled. Secondly, as a convenient source of references to the original operative description, but in this it fails and the failure is made more apparent because a few of the chapters are supplied with comprehensive references, setting a standard which only serves to highlight the deficiencies of other chapters. A book so dependent on illustrations is inevitably expensive. However, this should not deter general hospitals from regarding this volume as an important addition to the library.

VANESSA WRIGHT

Private Worlds of Dying Children. By Myra Bluebond-Langner. (Pp. 282. £8.40 hardback.) Princeton University Press: New Jersey. 1978.

This book is a very difficult one to review as the aims of the author are not clear to me. She is an anthropologist who spent 9 months in a unit treating children with