Book reviews

The Child with Spina Bifida. By Elizabeth M. Anderson and Bernie Spain. (Pp. 352; illustrated + tables. £7.50 hardback; £4.95 paperback.) Methuen: London. 1977.

Professionals from widely varying disciplines will welcome this clearly and sympathetically written book which brings together the major research findings on the emotional, social, and educational problems of children with spina bifida. Many parents, too, will find it a source of much-needed information. After an account of the medical and physical aspects of the condition, the authors, who are research psychologists with extensive experience of disabled children, go on to review the range of distressing problems encountered by families, though it is interesting that the effect on fathers still eludes systematic research.

Intellectual functioning and specific difficulties such as handwriting are carefully analysed. The authors draw on their own detailed research and provide a major contribution to knowledge in this area. Their emphasis on ways of encouraging development both before and at school and their argument for greater flexibility in meeting special educational needs make this section essential reading for anyone concerned with the education of children with spina bifida. The book concludes with a description of the problems facing the older child, particularly social isolation, and, as in other sections, makes valuable suggestions aimed at alleviating the situation.

The cumulative evidence from research does make some conclusions seem indisputable but it has to be said that the authors, though relying on research findings, do not attempt to evaluate critically the research they report and this is an area not without methodological problems. Thus the important issue of the precise effect on marital relationships is still not fully resolved. At times, too, the emphasis on research, despite excellent reporting, led one to miss the contribution that a more psychodynamic approach might have made towards an understanding of the powerful ambivalence towards offered help that is often met in clinical work. Nevertheless, this is a most valuable book.

S. DORNER

Hearing Loss in Children. Edited by Burton F. Jaffe. (Pp. 784; illustrated + tables. £21.25.) MTP Press: Lancaster. 1977.

It is a pleasure to welcome this comprehensive book on hearing loss in children. This is a subject that has attracted considerable attention for the past 30 years and an enormous volume of written material in the form of papers as well as books has been available throughout this period. Nevertheless, we find ourselves now with an urgent need for books of this type. The reason for this is that in the development of new techniques for the assessment and management of these children most progress has been made as a result of a high degree of sophisticated specialisation. Over the past few years this has been almost breathless in rapidity and the various specialists have tended to leave each other behind. We now look at one another and see an exciting but disjointed field of developmental paediatricians, otologists, audiologists, surgeons, geneticists, electrophysiologists, teachers, language therapists, hearing aid specialists, and counsellors of different types. How many paediatricians dealing with deaf children can recognise even the names of the otological operations practised on their patients? How many audiologists are aware of each new surgical technique which becomes available? There are indeed few surgeons who have had the time or training to place their work in the context of other aspects of management. All these subjects are treated in detail by some of the leading specialists in their field and the book, very helpfully edited by Dr Jaffe, should be strongly recommended for the shelves of all those individuals and departments who are in any way connected with deaf children.

ELLIS DOUEK

Gestational Age of the Newborn. A Clinical Manual. By Lilly M. S. Dubowitz and Victor Dubowitz. (Pp. xii + 139; illustrated + tables. US \$12.00.) Addison-Wesley: Menlo Park, California. 1977.

The purpose of this book, as stated in the preface, is to give a detailed description of the Dubowitz method of assessing gestational age. This is a valuable aim as attention to detail of technique is essential

in making any such method work. It is beautifully accomplished in chapter 4 which consists largely of a series of excellent photographs of many of the characteristics used in this method of gestational age assessment. The remaining 100 pages of the book are less useful. They consist of a review of the literature of gestational age assessment which, though reasonably complete, tends to emphasise too strongly the shortcomings of alternative methods, together with a description of the way the Dubowitz method was derived and applied in special groups. Most of this information is readily available in medical journals and it is far too long and detailed to be of value. As a result the book is too big for its limited purpose which is as a handbook for special care units in which the Dubowitz method is used.

J. M. PARKIN

Shorter notices

Pathogenesis of Human Muscular Dystrophy. Edited by Lewis P. Rowland. (Pp. 896; illustrated + tables. US \$66.95.) Excerpta Medica: Amsterdam. 1977.

Proceedings of the Fifth International Scientific Conference of the Muscular Dystrophy Association, Colorado, June 1976. Seventy pages with discussions covering many aspects of current research in these disorders. A very long book with no summary of conclusions. Definitely for the specialist in muscle disease.

Pediatric Oncologic Radiology. Edited by Bruce R. Parker and Ronald A. Castellino. (Pp. 451; illustrated + tables. US \$39.50.) Mosby: St. Louis. 1977.

A multiauthor monograph describing special radiological procedures and their application in lymphoreticular malignancies (including leukaemia), primary abdominal tumours, and 'miscellaneous solid tumours' (including brain and bone). Mainly on conventional radiological procedures, but a chapter on radioisotope imaging and very brief mention of CT scanning. Excellent illustrations.