Book reviews

Epilepsies of Childhood. Postgraduate Paediatrics Series. By Niall V O'Donohoe. (Pp. 318; illustrated + tables. £16.00 hardback.) Butterworth: London. 1979.

Niall O'Donohoe, the paediatric neurologist from Dublin, has written a comprehensive, valuable, and most readable book on the complex and often confused subject of epilepsies of childhood. The first half of the book deals with the many individual types of seizures which occur in children. The author uses the international classification of epilepsy, and for the first time persuaded me that this can be illuminating and helpful in the understanding of fits in childhood. However, he also emphasises the chronological aspect of childhood fits, correctly stressing the importance of age of onset. Difficult areas are generally dealt with very well, both those concerned with classification and diagnosis, as in the myoclonic epilepsies, and those concerned with management, for example the child who has had a single convulsion.

The second half of the book is concerned with more general aspects which cross the boundaries of the different varieties of fits. Many of these chapters contain valuable information—for example on 'Epilepsy and sleep'—though a few seem a little artificial—for example 'Epilepsy in the adolescent'.

The advice on management is excellent (even allowing for the prejudice I may have felt because the author's views agree so closely with my own), detailed, and practical. It is implicit throughout the book that there is more to the management of epilepsy than the administration of drugs. Nevertheless, there is much sound detail on drug treatment with clear statements of what, when, how, and how much. Drugs are dealt with not only under the individual types of fits, but also in separate chapters in the second half of the book, and there is good discussion of their unwanted effects as well as their value.

The writing is given depth by good and relevant short discussions of the neurophysiological background and by the author's wide and sensibly critical knowledge of the literature, which includes some very up-to-date references.

All this is set against references to the author's personal clinical experience, which are not simply anecdotal but give an impressive authority to what he says. It is intrinsically very difficult to obtain useful still photographs of fits, but he includes some excellent ones of petit mal and atonic-akinetic attacks.

I found remarkably little to criticise, but here are two suggestions for the second edition. The subject of restrictions on activity for the child with epilepsy is dealt with in passing in at least three places, but it deserves a fuller discussion and perhaps a separate chapter. Does Dr O'Donohoe have less difficulty than I do, with school medical officers and education authorities, over the question of epileptic children swimming? Could he be more specific about cycling, and about the question of the child with frequent fits going out on his own or taking himself to school? The whole question of risks and benefits needs careful analysis in this area. Secondly, the chapter on investigations could be improved by a more definite statement as to which laboratory investigations are worth doing and about the value of the EEG in management.

I warmly recommend this book to everyone who deals with children with epilepsy, and that must include virtually the whole readership of the *Archives*.

ROGER ROBINSON

Paediatric Emergencies. Postgraduate Paediatric Series. Edited by J A Black. (Pp. 874; illustrated + tables. £29.00 hardback.) Butterworth: London. 1979.

An emergency is here defined broadly as an acute illness in which lack of prompt and appropriate treatment would result in death, disability, or delayed recovery, and so the book is ambitious in scope and is therefore long. The emergencies covered are not only medical: there are—for example, separate chapters on multiple injuries, burns, dental emergencies, acute psychiatric, and medicolegal conditions. John Black, the editor, has himself written 33 of the 71 chapters. Although there are

more than 30 other contributors, an almost uniform clarity of expression, helped by well spaced subheadings, gives unity to this excellent book. It is easy to read and to refer to. It has a good index and there are useful cross references between chapters. At the end of most chapters there are a few up-to-date references. Particularly valuable are the chapters on acute poisoning (Roy Meadow), electrolyte disorders (John Black), diabetes (David Baum), and malaria (James Stanfield).

The section on tropical and subtropical disorders fills a great need and should make the book more widely popular, although the chapter on smallpox is now happily an anachronism and instead one would have liked to see the emergencies of the malnourished child dealt with more fully: keratomalacia is not mentioned.

In any such book there are bound to be gaps. Any paediatrician who is called regularly to the acutely ill newborn would have liked more on the problems of the infant of very low birthweight. I was disappointed not to find a separate chapter on respiratory distress, and there is only a brief description of ventilatory assistance to the newborn.

If it is true, as the editor suggests, that the standard of emergency care in general paediatric departments lags behind that of more specialised units, this book should help to remedy this. Although very readable, it is a front line book, for the acute paediatric ward rather than the library. Every paediatric department should have it.

DEREK ROBINSON

Paediatric Neurology. Edited by F Clifford Rose. (Pp. 701; illustrated + tables. £47.50 hardback.) Blackwell: Oxford, 1979.

This book claims in the foreword, I believe correctly, to be the first multiauthor textbook of paediatric neurology produced in the UK, and it will therefore be eagerly examined by British paediatricians as well as paediatric neurologists. As one would expect of a multiauthor book, there are some excellent and authoritative

chapters by leading experts in their particular field. These include F B Gibberd on petit mal, L S Basser on benign paroxysmal vertigo, F S Gubbay on the clumsy child, and Sheila Wallace on pyrexial convulsions. John Stephenson contributes a fascinating chapter on cerebellar disorders, with some rather personal views and much condensed useful information. Perhaps another half dozen of the 39 chapters are of almost the same interest and quality, but much of the rest is a disappointment. Barely a quarter of the authors are practising paediatric neurologists, and some of the chapters seem to be based more on knowledge of the literature or on experience with adults than on wide practical experience of children with neurological disorders. Some major subjects like cerebral palsy and epilepsy (other than the specific aspects already mentioned) are dealt with less fully and adequately than one would expect in a textbook of paediatric neurology, which should provide appreciably more than a standard textbook of paediatrics. The work of the developmental assessment centre is well described, and there is a somewhat theoretical chapter on developmental neurology, but there is no full and satisfactory account of developmental assessment and what it contributes to paediatric neurological diagnosis. The chapters on degenerative CNS disorders are somewhat weak and would not provide a great deal of practical help in the recognition of the child who has a progressive disorder and then the diagnosis of which it is. In its first edition, therefore, the book has some of the strengths but many of the weaknesses of multiple authorship. It does not provide a comprehensive and cohesive account of paediatric neurology to stand comparison with the best of its American counterparts.

ROGER ROBINSON

Patient and Family Education. Tools, Techniques, and Theory. Edited by Rose-Marie Duda McCormick and Tamar Gilson-Parkevich. (Pp. 372; illustrated + tables. £9.00 (\$19.00) paperback.) Wiley: Chichester. 1979.

This is a book about health education, an ordered presentation of attitudes and procedures which have developed in the

Children's Hospital, Columbus, Ohio, and the community it serves. Part 1 is concerned with concept and method; part 2 with the practical handling of 70 procedures and situations from taking the temperature (still on the Fahrenheit scale) to the management of diabetes and cystic fibrosis. The precision of these is impressive, but the reasons for including G6-PD deficiency and excluding disturbed behaviour and psychiatric disorders is not explained.

Five of the 7 authors are nurses, and the programme on which the book is based was fashioned in the hospital's department of nursing. It is designed for 'today's health professionals and students' and for 'patients, parents, and staff'.

Such a book may be useful in the present context of paediatrics, paediatric nursing, and parent expectations in the USA; I have serious reservations about its value in Britain. It is 'hospital centred' when we are seeking to bring the hospital into a supporting role to primary care in the community.

It is grounded in traditional physical disease when need is moving towards handicap, disturbed behaviour, and the effect on the child of family dysfunction and breakdown.

Precision is certainly essential for the effective management of illness; the detail of the instructions in this book suggest that patient and family education is not simply a desirable factor in the parent-professional partnership on which rational health care depends, but a necessary means of containing the rising costs of medical care in the USA.

We shall always need to improve our communication with children and parents, but in the UK this is primarily personal not verbal.

This book would persuade us that in addition to the responsibility for personal explanation inherent in all medical and nursing practice we should develop a formal educational system, with all its inflationary demands for time and money, and yet another professional—the parent-educator. And all for a process 'the effectiveness of which is unknown'.

The authors claim that 'today's nurses are providing more health care education than any other group'; it was therefore surprising that the role of the nurse as family interpreter was not central to their educational approach. If this had been the case the book could have been addressed to a precise audience, and by separating the nurse teaching material from direct

parent guidance the present ambivalence could have been avoided.

However, the authors would ask to be judged by their peers both in nursing and health education. Until that is done I hope British paediatric nurses will come out from hospitals into homes, that they will be more ready to accept parents as professional partners in the care of children, and above all that they will never see pamphlets, however well designed, as a substitute for personal advice.

DONALD COURT

Primary Child Care: Book 2. A guide for the community leader, manager, and teacher. By Maurice King, Felicity King, and Soebagyo Martodipoero. (Pp. 194; illustrated + tables. £3.95 paperback.) Oxford Medical Publications: Oxford. 1979.

Those concerned with child health in developing countries and many others will already be familiar with Maurice King's book *Primary Child Care*. That volume however was only the first of four parts of his microplan to help in the training in child health of medical assistants and many others. The second part consisted of 10 sets of 24 slides to be used in conjunction with the first book. These sets are available from TALC Institute of Child Health, 30 Guilford Street, London WC1 1EH, in various forms, the least costly being only £15 (or £9 for those ordering for use in developing countries).

Like other materials from TALC in this form, the slides cost less than the price of a 35 mm film at normal retail price. They are sent out post-free with a full script.

The third part is the book reviewed here, which provides managers—such as district medical officers, senior nurses, and midwives—with a wide variety of instruments for measuring some variables that determine the quality of primary child care.

While primarily aimed at developing countries the concepts developed in this book are likely to be of wider interest. Rather more than half of the book is devoted to three sets of multiple choice questions. For each of the 26 chapters in the workers manual there is a pretest, also a set of questions for the students to practise on and teach themselves, and lastly a set for a post-test when the study of the chapter has been completed.