Book reviews

Anaesthesia for Children, including Aspects of Intensive Care. By T C K Brown and G C Fisk. (Pp. 439; illustrated + tables. £29.50 hardback.) Blackwell: Oxford. 1979.

This book is based on the strong foundations of paediatric anaesthesia in Australia created by Dr Margaret McClelland and Dr John Stocks, notably in Melbourne.

The brief and helpful introductory chapters concern anatomy, physiology, and pharmacology; these are followed by accounts of anaesthetic apparatus, and intravenous and monitoring equipment. There is an excellent chapter 'The child in hospital', which complements a brief account of the preoperative preparation and premedication of the patient, and a later account of particular medical diseases in children which are relevant to anaesthesia.

The general principles of the management of babies and children undergoing anaesthesia are clearly explained, and there are chapters devoted to all the subspecialties within anaesthesia. Special problems—such as burns, the management of fluid, electrolyte and acid-base disturbances, regional and local anaesthesia, hypothermia, induced hypotension, and day-case surgery are described also. The chapters concerning intensive care in children are selective and consider only intravenous nutrition, acute respiratory failure, and poisoning.

The book is highly readable and informative; there is no superfluous material and references have been kept to a minimum. This has meant that the account invariably reflects the authors' own practice and preferences and there is not a lot of scope to describe or discuss alternatives. However, the result is a superb and concise account of modern paediatric anaesthesia with many excellent accompanying illustrations and it should be in the possession of every anaesthetist.

A P ADAMS

Diagnosis and Management of the Fetus and Neonate at Risk. A Guide for Team Care, fourth edition. By S G Babson, M L Pernoll, and G I Benda, assisted by K Simpson. (Pp. 345; illustrated + tables. £15.50 hardback.) Mosby: St Louis. 1980.

This is the fourth edition of a book published first in 1966 and last in 1975. The authors, two paediatricians and one obstetrician, with the assistance of a neonatal nurse, emphasise the need for a team approach to perinatal care and express the hope that, in particular, the book will help to guide physicians and nurses working in community hospitals (the USA equivalent to our district general hospital) who must, of necessity, give critical care to sick infants either until the problem is resolved or until the patient is transferred to a more specialised centre. The text is divided into 37 chapters, each with its own brief but comprehensive bibliography, and dealing with the main disorders of the perinatal period under the 4 titles 'Diagnosis and management', 'Serious obstetric problems', 'Perinatal outcome', and 'Prevention'. Also there are a number of useful appendices dealing with matters such as newborn transfer and drug dosages. Much of the text is divided into note-like numbered sections which facilitate quick reference and enable a great deal of information to be packed into a relatively small space. After allowing for the differences in approach across the Atlantic, and the fact that the authors do not claim that they have dealt with perinatal problems in great depth, it is then possible to recommend this book warmly for the purpose for which it was designed. Candidates for higher examinations in either paediatrics or obstetrics will find it particularly useful.

P M DUNN

Topics in Perinatal Medicine. Edited by B A Wharton. (Pp. 176; illustrated tables. £10.00 hardback.) Pitman Medical: Tunbridge Wells. 1980.

In 1976 the Neonatal Symposium which had been an annual event in Bristol since 1969 was taken under the aegis of the newly formed British Paediatric Perinatal Group. Since then it has been held at a different place each year and this book is based on the symposium held in Birmingham in 1978. It also includes four Mary Crosse Memorial Lectures.

One of the major difficulties in producing proceedings of any conference is the loss of impact caused by the delay between the spoken word and publication. This book had a gestation of 18 months but virtually all the papers have retained their value and are just as important today as they were in 1978. The stated aim was to review perinatal mortality from the point of view of its causes and prevention. The book starts with a section on perinatal statistics and antenatal care and goes on to sections on the common causes of neonatal death: preterm delivery, respiratory distress syndrome, and malformations. There is a memorable paper by H Jolly on perinatal death and the family; and the last section of the symposium is on organisation of neonatal care with some warnings on iatrogenic hazards. The final section of the book comprises the first four Mary Crosse Annual Memorial Lectures. Dr Berry Corner gave the first of these in 1975, it was a review of neonatal care from Dr Crosse's early days at the Sorrento Hospital until 1975. The others were by B A Wharton on the 'Asian mother and her baby', J D Baum on 'The milk of human kindness', and P M Dunn on 'Perinatal care—here and there'. These lectures form a valuable addition to the book and deserve to reach a wider audience.

B D SPEIDER