Book reviews

Pediatric Cardiac Dysrhythmias. Volume editors P C Gillette and A Garson, Jr. Clinical Cardiology Monographs Series. Series editors J Willis Hurst and D T Mason. (Pp. 474; illustrated + tables. \$44.50.) Grune & Stratton: New York. 1981.

There are few books that deal with disorders of cardiac rhythm in children, and doubtless Gillette and Garson have accumulated much of the available, if limited, experience in this one. However the experience is uniquely American and there is a lack of reference to experiences obtained in European centres specialising in paediatric cardiac arrhythmias.

The first three chapters deal with the diagnosis and assessment of cardiac arrhythmias; in particular the first chapter gives a comprehensive review of deductive electrocardiography, making use of a consistent format for figures of ECGs. New investigation techniques that can specifically be applied to children are considered. Practical aspects are particularly well covered and there are useful guidelines for paediatric physicians working in this field.

In chapter 4, basic electrophysiological principles are reviewed and antiarrhythmic therapy in general. If differences exist in the use of drugs between adults and children, these are stressed but it is clear that more experience in this field is needed, and no doubt later editions will be necessary.

The next 6 chapters deal with specific cardiac arrhythmias from extrasystoles to ventricular tachycardia, including the re-entrant supraventricular arrhythmias so often a problem in children. Chapters 11-14 deal with disorders of AV conduction, and chapter 15 with cardiac pacemakers used in the management of such disorders. Chapter 16 considers the surgical treatment of refractory tachycardias.

There is a useful appendix giving protocols for the investigation of certain arrhythmias, and the index is relevant and well planned.

In the absence of other reference textbooks on the subject, this book is essential reading for paediatricians and is a must for libraries.

P V L CURRY

Pediatric Clinical Chemistry, a Survey of Reference (Normal) Values, Methods, and Instrumentation, with commentary, second edition. Edited by S Meites. (Pp. 513; illustrated + tables. Price not given, hardback.) The American Association for Clinical Chemistry: Washington DC. 1981.

The aim of this book was to enlarge and refine the collation of reference values for paediatric clinical chemistry begun with the first edition in 1977. The result is an A to Z, literally acetaminophen to zinc, containing normal ranges for more than 200 analytes together with detailed references to data sources and the analytical methods used. Each entry has a standard format which also includes essential details of specimen volume, collection and preservation, and any special patient preparation required. The entries are rounded off by critical commentaries discussing the choice of analytical method and factors that might significantly affect results. Additional commentary is provided by introductory chapters on techniques and interpretation, and miscellaneous accounts of particular tests—for example for digestive function—fetal lung maturity, and specific proteins.

The editors and 68 contributors intended to convey the 'state of the art' of paediatric clinical chemistry and they have succeeded. The book is a balanced appraisal of a rapidly developing subject, and the reference data are the most comprehensive to be found anywhere. It is a must for all paediatric clinical chemistry laboratories.

A D PATRICK

Paediatrics in the Tropics. Edited by R G Hendrickse. (Pp. 375; illustrated + tables. £20.00 hardback.) Oxford University Press: Oxford. 1981.

Paediatricians working in the tropics and subtropics, which embrace most of the less-developed countries of the world, tend to be an under-privileged minority charged with the awesome responsibility of providing medical services for children who constitute the substantial majority

of those in need of medical care and supervision. Their work load is enormous and demands on their services are unending. Many of them work in circumstances that isolate them from professional and academic colleagues, remote from libraries and other reference sources. When these factors are combined it is clear that keeping in touch with international opinion and advances in knowledge relevant to their sphere of interest and activity poses almost insuperable problems for the majority. 'Study leave' in these circumstances becomes a necessity not a privilege, but generally both time and money are lacking for this purpose.

In the Year of the Child, 1979, the Editor of this volume set up a three weeks Tropical Paediatrics Update Course/Workshop and this book emanated from those lectures and discussions. The first part of the volume is devoted to neonatology and special emphasis is placed on the neonatal tetanus, low birthweight, and light for dates babies, and other problems commonly found in this age group in tropical countries. Other sections deal with general paediatrics, infectious and parasitic diseases, and child health services. The editor has collected papers which will appeal to and be valuable for paediatricians working in developing countries. It might well be said that too little emphasis has been placed on prevention; for example only three lines are given to the active immunisation of mothers against neonatal tetanus. Undoubtedly the weakest part of the book is that which discusses child health services. Little reference is made to the fact that governments all over the world have failed to take any services to the majority of children who live in rural areas. However, this orientation of the book to paediatricians working in urban areas is perhaps justified as, more or less, it is only in these circumstances that paediatricians who could purchase and make use of this book are working.

This deserves a place on the shelves of the libraries of paediatric units around the world, and I hope that the editor will compile a further volume in the not too distant future.

D MORLEY