unwanted pregnancy, and hydatidiform mole.

The second part of the book discusses methodological issues in perinatal epidemiology, a section which I found quite revealing. These chapters cover sampling and statistical analysis, the design and conduct of randomised clinical trials related to perinatal research, the assessment of occupational and environmental factors particularly with reference to drug induced congenital malformations, the detection and assessment of neurological dysfunction, and finally critical consideration of the presentation of perinatal mortality rates.

The chapters are clearly written by experts and each is completely up to date. The sections, for instance, on classifying congenital malformations or neurobehavioural dysfunction review fully the many described methods, allowing the reader to discriminate for himself which one is the most useful. This book is a welcome addition to the departmental library.

NEIL MCINTOSH

Microbes and Infections of the gut. Edited by C S Goodwin. Pp 377: £27.50. Blackwell Scientific Publications, 1984.

The realisation that in developing countries diarrhoea is the cause of death of one third of all children who die before 5 years of age has stimulated research into the pathogenesis, treatment, and prevention of gastrointestinal infections. Professor Goodwin has enlisted the help of acknowledged British experts to assist him and his antipodean colleagues in summarising the current state of knowledge in this field.

The opening chapter contains an excellent review of the development of intestinal flora, in which the evidence for a microbial aetiology of necrotising enterocolitis is also examined. Individual chapters are devoted to groups of enteric pathogens including bacteria, viruses, amoebae, protozoa, and helminths. There are also chapters on gut immunology, immunisation, small intestinal overgrowth, and the prevention and

treatment of surgical sepsis after gut surgery. The public health implications of gastroenteritis are covered in two chapters by the editor and Professor Michael Gracey. The book concludes by summarising the evidence implicating the metabolic activities of gut bacteria in the aetiology of colonic cancer which, while interesting, seems out of place.

I particularly enjoyed the chapter on viral infections of the gut in which Dr Flewett writes about an old personal friend, the rotavirus, in fine, 'chatty' style. If, like me, you do not know a *Metagonimus yokogawi* from an *Angiostrongylus costaricensis*, I would strongly recommend the chapter on amoebic dysentery, intestinal protozoa, and helminths by Dr David Grove.

The preface states that this book is recommended to physicians, surgeons, paediatricians, oncologists, microbiologists, and immunologists. While it is true that there is something for all of them, my concern is that there will be insufficient in a book of this size to satisfy any of them. It could prove useful on the bookshelf of a gastroenteritis unit when, for example, a child is admitted with *Plesiomonas shigelloides*. I would also recommend it to anyone embarking on research in this field.

D C A CANDY

Anaerobic Infections in Childhood. By I Brook. Pp 359: £29.75 hardback. G K Hall, 1984.

The author has tried to present in one volume the clinical, microbiological, and therapeutic data necessary for the paediatrician to diagnose and treat anaerobic infections. The book is divided into five sections with 33 chapters. The introductory section deals with the normal anaerobic flora, collection and transportation of samples, the clinical approach to diagnosis, and anaerobes as pathogens. Ten chapters are devoted to neonatal infections and 13 to infections of specific organs. The final chapter on the principles of management is

preceded by a section on miscellaneous infections, which includes tetanus and botulism. There are extensive lists of references after each chapter which amount to some 50 pages.

The book is packed with data and a good perspective is maintained on the relative role of aerobes and anaerobes. Despite its scientific merits, however, I found this book heavy going. I feel it would have benefited from shortening to approximately 250 pages. This could have been achieved if material in the numerous tables had not been duplicated in the text and if certain topics had been amalgamated. Some aspects appear in near identical form in several chapters, for example treatment of neonatal chest infection. Editors of scientific journals insist on economy of words and I believe the reader has every right to expect the same from scientific books.

The division into chapters borders on the idiosyncratic at times. For instance, the establishment of the oral flora is discussed in chapter one, rather than in chapter five on 'Colonisation of the newborn'. These chapters should be read together if one is to understand the subject.

The chapter on treatment supplements the recommendations given at the end of each chapter. Prescribing in the United Kingdom differs from that in America, however, where the Federal Drug Administration does not approve the use of metronidazole in children. This must be remembered when chloramphenicol is suggested for treatment of certain minor infections. The omission of guidelines for antibiotic prophylaxis in bowel surgery is, I believe, a serious one. When does one give the drug, by what route, and how many doses?

The wealth of scientific data and references should commend this book to the few clinicians and microbiologists with a major interest in infection in children, although there are omissions which would disappoint them. Sadly, while supporting the general message, I cannot commend this book to most paediatricians.

R H GEORGE