Book reviews

Bronchodilator Therapy. The basis of asthma and chronic obstructive airways disease management. Edited by T J H Clark and G M Cochrane. Pp 230: \$Aus 62.00 hardback. ADIS Press Ltd, 1984.

This book is designed to review bronchodilator therapy extensively and clearly. It was written as the second volume in the series which started with *Steroids in Asthma*. It is beautifully and copiously illustrated and all aspects of the clinical use of bronchodilators seem to be mentioned. The index is adequate and permits rapid reference. The advice and sentiments—such as 'bronchodilator therapy is rarely unjustified' and 'asthma is far from over-diagnosed', are appropriate. Each section is a lucid, well organised, and useful presentation of the individual author's view of bronchodilator therapy. There are multiple different routes to optimum control, all of which will permit asthmatic children to lead full normal lives. As is predictable, this volume suffers from this legitimate diversity of mechanisms whereby the desirable goal is achieved.

Only two (out of 14) authors are practising paediatricians, while at least one of the adult chest physicians runs a paediatric asthma clinic. A large input from paediatricians with a special interest in respiratory disease would have been desirable. Paediatricians will find the paediatric sections valuable and informative. The reviews of published reports are often extensive but not necessarily totally representative of the field. General paediatricians with only a passing interest in asthma may also find the book useful and the nebuliser section will be of particular value to them. I had differences with some of the expressed views. The theophylline doses quoted were lower than is effectively prescribed in other centres and routine monitoring of dosage should surely now be by salivary estimates rather than by plasma. I could find no reference to the Asthma Society leaflets which are very useful in the education of parents and children in the rationale and management of asthma, though the book does contain a very proper emphasis that this education is important. The price seems reasonable.

I would recommend this book as potentially useful for all practising paediatricians.

F CARSWELL

Cardiovascular Pathology in Infants and Children. By J B Arey. Pp 392: £72.00 hardback. W B Saunders, 1984.

This volume covers the pathology and, to a very limited extent, some clinical features of congenital heart disease and such acquired disease as affect the cardiovascular system in childhood. The book is a textbook of 'pathology', written by pathologists, for pathologists. The forward tells us that it has been prepared from a series of books or manuals used by residents in pathology in Philadelphia over the past 25 years. The original intention was to prepare a comprehensive textbook of paediatric pathology but the section on cardiovascular pathology is the only one yet to be published.

Had this book been published, as was intended, 20 years ago it would have filled a useful gap in the literature on heart disease in children. Its long gestation, however, shows in a number of serious shortcomings. The nomenclature used is largely that in use two decades ago and the authors neither justify nor discuss the terms which they espouse. Worse than this, many of their terms are produced without any explanation of their intended meaning, which to the novice in the field must make the text difficult to follow. The current debate concerning use of the segmental approach to diagnosis and description is glossed over with hardly a mention. The illustrations consist almost entirely of black and white photographs of pathological specimens. These are generally disappointing as the pictures are consistently slightly out of focus and are in most cases poorly annotated.

At £72 this book is not one which is likely to appeal to most pathologists in training unless they have a special interest in cardiac disease. If they do have such an interest then they will find the book disappointing on another count (and one which renders it of little value to the would be paediatric cardiologist!). This is the extremely cursory treatment of the somewhat rarer, but very important, malformations which provide a more severe diagnostic challenge to clinician or pathologist. Such defects as single ventricle (univentricular heart), and double outlet right (and left) ventricle are particularly poorly treated.

All in all this is a disappointing book.

J L WILKINSON

The Measurement of Human Growth. By N Cameron. Pp 182: £15.95 hardback. Croom Helm, 1984.

This book gives an excellent review of all aspects of growth measurement and its interpretation, considering the subject in a logical sequence beginning with its history over 300 years. There follows sections on current instrumentation, relevant anatomical landmarks, and descriptions and techniques for 47 measurements. There are then chapters on assessment of reliability; techniques of skeletal age assessment and prediction of adult height; and detailed descriptions of photographic techniques. The final chapter deals with analysis of data progressing from the application of simple centile standards to computerisation. For each chapter there is an excellent reference list and the book is lavishly illustrated.

This is a readable, understandable book with a wealth of information and advice accrued over many years by an expert and put together for the first time conveniently in one volume. Here is everything that anyone interested in anthropometry could possibly require. It is sad, therefore, that the cost, about 9p per page, is so prohibitive. In the forward Professor Tanner commends the book 'to Human Biologists and Biological Anthropologists interested in Auxology and to paediatricians and their para-medical colleagues making any sort of auxological observations.' I doubt whether many of these potential readers will consider sufficient of the contents are appropriate for them to make it worthwhile buying the whole 182 pages!

In practice there can be few of us who ever undertake more than a fraction of the measurements included here, and those commonly used are described adequately with similar illustrations in other familiar books and journals. For those few whose experience warrants knowledge of all the equipment and techniques other parts of the book may be too elementary. Though the figures are mostly good, some showing instruments are disappointing as the details and orientation are not clear.