Book reviews

Current therapy in pediatric infectious disease. By J D Nelson. £39.50 hardback. Blackwell Scientific, 1986.

This book is a compilation of personal approaches to the management of paediatric infection and as such is not intended to be 'a textbook of infectious diseases'. An extensive range of illness is covered, from that encountered by any doctor dealing with children—for example, otitis media, acute diarrhoea, and croup—to that seen with any frequency only by the specialist—for example, tularaemia and Lyme disease.

There is a loose overall format but a great variance in the amount of general background information with which each author invests his writing. This may leave the reader glossing over the obvious on the one hand and scurrying to standard works on the other to provide a base for the text. This is a book more for the doctor with a certain minimum of experience than for the student. The editor sees the book as the synthesis of the contributor's past instruction, personal experience, and assessment of the medical publications. There are thus no references. It is always of interest to hear how others deal with clinical problems familiar to oneself, but I found the absolute absence of references somewhat frustrating when stimulated by a comment to look up the source.

Overall, the book makes interesting and enjoyable reading, but I am doubtful of its usefulness to the general British paediatrician. At times I could not help feeling that parts of it were lacking in substance, and because of the array of diseases covered too little is often said of too much.

S P CONWAY

Child Health Behavior: a Behavioral Pediatric Perspective. Edited by N A Krasnegor, J D Arasteth, M F Cataldo. Pp 644: £49.10 hardback. John Wiley and Sons, 1986.

To what extent should British paediatricians be concerning themselves with developments in behavioural paediatrics? Is there any coherent 'behavioural paediatrics perspective' on child health behaviour as the title of this prolix volume suggests. Perhaps not, if we accept the view of the

ultimate chapter's authors; to wit, it is 'an area ultimately defined by the activity of its participants.' Historically, the field of interest developed from three fairly distinct origins. Firstly, liaison psychiatry and child psychiatric theory and practice; secondly, psychosomatic medicine in adults; and thirdly, empirical research in experimental psychology, especially learning theory and principles of behaviour modification that derived from it. Contributions relevant to each of these aspects of behavioural paediatrics are included.

Intended to be a comprehensive assessment of the current state of knowledge about behavioural paediatrics, the book suffers from a lack of focus. For instance, a chapter on the philosophy of 'behavioural systems' rubs shoulders with an excellent review of the appropriate functions health education should play in schools. All in all, there are 26 chapters, but just one in three merits reading in depth. These include, besides that mentioned above, approaches to the control of childhood accidents, a critical review of campaigns to reduce smoking among adolescents, social and behavioural aspects of obesity, the primary prevention of hypertension, a biobehavioural analysis of the origins and management of childhood headache, problems in parental compliance with treatment, paediatric gastrointestinal disorders, strategies and future directions for research in behaviour management of paediatric problems, and issues concerning training in behavioural paediatrics.

Besides difficulties in maintaining a coherent focus of content, the book suffers from failing clearly to define its potential readership. Paediatricians may well become exasperated by endless 'conceptual models' and discussion on the 'theoretical underpinning of ecological sub-systems.' A more than passing acquaintance with the use of behaviour modification techniques is advisable before tackling the contributions by behavioural scientists. Clinical psychologists and child psychiatrists involved in paediatric liaison work may find it more to their taste. In conclusion, this could have been an excellent book at half the length, highlighting issues the contemplation of which would benefit those employed in general or community paediatric practice.

DAVID SKUSE

The Overactive Child. Edited by R A Taylor. Pp 269: £16.00 hardback. Blackwell Scientific/Spastics International Medical Publications, 1986.

This book from the Maudsley has taken on the task of critically examining what is truth and untruth and what is fact and fantasy in the world of hyperactivity. The result is a scholarly and objective book that leaves no stone unturned. While it is not light reading, there is an enormous amount of real information on a subject that has been surrounded by vagueness in definition and management.

GWILYN HOSKING

Diagnostic Paediatric Imaging—a Case Study Teaching Manual. By C M Hall, S Lingam. Pp 200: £29.00 hardback. Springer-Verlag, 1986.

This 'case study teaching manual' assembled by a radiologist and a paediatrician presents imaging material from 100 cases arranged in systems. Each case has five to seven questions based usually on one or two images. Answers on the following pages are of easy access (possibly too easy) with concise information and often further explanatory images. The imaging examples cover all the usual modalities except angiograms and nuclear magnetic resonance, and there seem to be no examples of intracardiac anomalies. The central nervous system is also probably under represented, with only four cases. Aspects tested cover not only powers of radiological observation but also a knowledge of relevant clinical matters as well as the choice of further imaging techniques to use. Some emphasis is laid on testing practical knowledge on performing radiological procedures—for example, barium enema for intussusception in case 19—and the choice of contrast material to use. Examination candidates need lists of differential diagnoses and this book has them—for example, conditions associated with hemihypertrophy, causes of osteoporosis, and causes of radial hypoplasia.

The answers are concise but some have further comments, though there are no references to read further. There is a good subject index.

Setting water tight questions is always difficult and experts might disagree on what was the diagnosis and what was the differential diagnosis in case 87, but the questions mainly avoid confusion.

In two cases my colleagues and I were unable to identify the lesion reported in the answer (a pneumothorax and a radiolucent area in bone) even after looking at the *x* ray pictures again, but I imagine there is an inherent problem in transposing *x* rays into print that makes them less clear than the original.

For myself, I enjoyed reading this book and learned a lot. For teaching in paediatric departments and for private study it will be a useful resource. Diploma in child health candidates are rarely shown *x* ray films, but this book will be useful for those taking part II of the MRCP examination in paediatrics. Presumably it will be similarly helpful to radiologists in training.

G MCENERY

Understanding Allergies. By M Steel. Pp 176: £5.95 paperback. Consumer's Association/Hodder and Stoughton, 1986.

Food Allergy—A Primer for People. By S A Bock. Pp 72: paperback. A J Publishing Co, 1986.

These are both good books about allergy and can be recommended to parents. 'Understanding Allergies' is easy to read, covers a wide field, is technically fairly accurate, though tends to emphasise the allergic aspects of atopic disease, and is marred only by a weak final section on complementary medicine. 'Food Allergy—A Primer for People' is confined to the subject of food allergy and is a distillation of the various diagnostic and therapeutic

principles and techniques. It has a useful final section on controversial or unorthodox procedures.

T J DAVID

Inspecting the Newborn Baby's Eyes. By N O'Doherty, Pp 104: £75.00 hardback. MTP Press, 1986.

Professor O'Doherty comes over in his book as an enthusiastic and stimulating teacher, full of anecdote and incidental observation. At first, the title of the book seems very limiting as fundoscopy is almost entirely excluded and the level of examination suggested appropriate for the obstetric or paediatric senior house officer. On turning the pages, however, one is persuaded that almost all of neonatal disease may be seen by inspecting babies' eyes. The mainly coloured plates are very well reproduced but illustrate much that is only peripheral to the examination of the eyes, such as cryptorchidism, syndactyly, and a child with a hearing aid to illustrate deafness. Many show older infants or even adults.

Unfortunately, while being a delightful read for the experienced paediatrician and classicist (it is liberally sprinkled with quotations), the book is too eclectic and meandering for the learner. Where the slide collection was well provided rarities are well illustrated. In the brief section on eye infections, however, chlamydia is not even mentioned, and retinopathy of prematurity only just gets in, although the index refers us to illustrations of a retinoblastoma. At £75, it is only a suitable gift for the neonatologist who has everything.

RICHARD COOKE

Practical Paediatrics. Edited by M J Robinson. Pp 613: £24.00 paperback. Churchill Livingstone, 1986.

This is described in the foreword as the first Australian textbook of general paediatrics. It is aimed mainly at undergraduates but is more comprehensive than most such British texts. Though the list of authors is large, including 38 Australians and one Malaysian, the style is consistent and readable and the approach practical and problem orientated. I particularly liked the chapters on genetics, the approach to the dysmorphic child, and growth and development and the section on social and preventive paediatrics. History and examination is not neglected and the chapter on the difficult topic of inborn errors of metabolism is a model of clarity.

The practical presentation can cause problems, such as the unsatisfactory siting of important topics like failure to thrive and fever of unknown origin in a miscellaneous penultimate chapter. Nutrition is dealt with rather skimpily, just six pages, including two on obesity and one that is a list of artificial milks.

These are, however, minor criticisms. I enjoyed reading this book and would recommend it to my residents reading for postgraduate examinations. It has a distinctive Australian flavour in morbidity and epidemiology data, in covering the problems of Aboriginal and Australian immigrant families, and even in mention of Agent Orange as a possible teratogen, but overall this book differs little from my practice and teaching in northern Scotland. I would suggest that a British edition with minor modifications would be a considerable competitor for our own textbooks.

P J SMAIL