Book reviews

Pediatric and Fundamental Electrocardiography. Edited by Jerome Liebman, Robert Plonsey, and Yoram Rudy. Pp 406: £78 hardback. Martinus Nijhoff Publishing, 1987. ISBN 0-89838-815-5.

This multiauthored book may be divided into three parts. The first deals with topics in basic science electrocardiography, the second with arrhythmias and electrophysiological techniques in children, and the third with body surface potential mapping. Hence the unusual, and somewhat unnatural, combination of 'Pediatric' and 'Fundamental' electrocardiography of the title. It is hard to envisage a wide audience for this selected combination of topics. The basic science sections require knowledge in physics beyond the scope of most clinicians. While some of the clinically based chapters are well written and comprehensive, coverage of the field is very uneven. For example, there are no guidelines as to what constitutes a 'dangerous' accessory pathway in Wolff Parkinson White syndrome, despite the major emphasis on electrophysiology. The book is well presented, with excellent reproduction of electrocardiograms and electrophysiological data. It is unlikely to be of major interest to paediatricians, however,

and its appeal would seem confined to the small number of paediatric cardiologists with an electrophysiology interest, and the even smaller number of basic scientists in this field.

I SULLIVAN

Drug Therapy for Asthma: Research and Clinical Practice (Lung Biology in Health and Disease Series Vol 31). Edited by John W Jenne and Shirley Murphy. Pp 1152: \$169.75 (US and Canada) \$203.50 (all other countries) hardback. Dekker, 1987. ISBN 0-8247-7633-X.

This is one of those increasingly popular multiauthor books dealing with all aspects of drug treatment in asthma. Most of the 41 contributors are North American and the book forms the 31st volume in the series *Lung Biology in Health and Disease*. The editors claim the book provides in one source both the 'theoretical groundwork and practice specifics of asthma drug therapy.' The small print does not make the book easy to read but much information is included on all aspects of drug treatment of asthma: smooth muscle anatomy, airway

receptors, calcium channel blockers, and in vitro studies of bronchodilators. Detailed studies on pharmacology and pharmacokinetics of all drugs are described; some of these are no longer in clinical use in the United Kingdom. Two interesting chapters compare the clinical management of adult asthma both in the United Kingdom and the United States. American experience with methyl xanthines is described at length. There is a useful chapter on aerosol dynamics and delivery systems.

Both paediatric chapters give a good account of North American practice. The difficulties using theophyllines are again emphasised with newer methods of monitoring. Topically active steroids have only one paragraph with two recent American references. Dry powder inhaled steroids are not mentioned. Salbutamol respirator solution only became available last year in the United States.

The British paediatrician will find little to help with clinical practice in this country. This is an expensive book for the paediatric department bookshelf. Nevertheless, it is a comprehensive well referenced work useful for all those actively involved in asthma research.

J COGSWELL