nine deal with general topics such as aetiology, epidemiology, investigations, treatment both orthodox and unorthodox, and psychology; the next 13 are devoted to descriptions of specific conditions including the leukaemias. The result is a mini textbook that would serve well as an introduction to paediatric oncology for medical postgraduates.

Some parents, no doubt, will wish to have this degree of detail and more, but I think many may find the fare a little strong. The first chapter, for instance, begins with an explanation of the chemical structure of the double helix and the chapter on Wilms' tumour starts off 'This is a malignancy of primitive embryonal cells . . . associated with other congenital malformations such as marked asymmetry of one side of the body . . . (and) loss of genetic material on the short arm of chromosome 11'. Just as it takes two to fight or tango, it takes two sides of the body to be asymmetrical; that apart, I fear that some parents might find this kind of writing a touch confusing.

If this were a meal I would not recommend it to those disposed to the gout. It might be an apodagrous epicure's delight but even he (or she) would need a first class head waiter to guide him through the courses.

D P ADDY
Consultant paediatrician

Paediatric Therapeutics. D Baltrop and M J Brueton. (Pp 457: hardback.) Butterworth-Heinemann, 1991. ISBN 0-7506-1344-0.

The editors of *Paediatric Therapeutics* intended to 'generate a source of practical information concerning mode of action, choice and use of drugs relevant to paediatric practice'. Instead they have compiled a collection of review articles with more emphasis on therapeutics than a standard paediatric textbook but with less guidance on recommended practice and drug dosage than certain popular residents' pocketbooks or the *British National Formulary*.

The first two chapters of pure science do not relate well to the rest of the book and are made difficult for the clinician by the inclusion of complex formulas and equations without their practical relevance being demonstrated. The important modifications of pharmacokinetics relating to age and development are disappointingly scanty and speculative, seemingly because there is a dearth of scientific data relevant to the growing individual. The main part of the volume comprises chapters on selected therapeutic topics, for example, 'management of infection', and 'corticosteroids' as well as a series of reviews of the major body systems and of paediatric specialty practice. For the generalist, 'cardiovascular disorders' and 'poisoning' are of most value as they combine a concise theoretical background with practical guidelines as to the use and dangers of drugs which have crept into the pharmacopeia in the years since many of us learnt the principles of pharmacology. Other chapters are not outstanding as the contributors have not kept to the remit of the title of the book. Tables composed of lists of causes are superfluous in a textbook of therapeutics and more simple charts relevant to management would have made the text more useful for reference. A large section is devoted to malignant disease; the treatment of leukaemia is described in two separate chapters without cross reference. Such duplication should have been avoided in

a book of this size especially as the authors recommend that the chemotherapy of cancer should be managed in specialised centres. Furthermore, several common paediatric controversies are hardly mentioned. The omission of the following topics is disappointing: firstly, a reasoned discussion of the dose and duration of courses of antibiotics—whether to increase dose with severity of infection, for example benzylpenicillin in meningococcal meningitis and in neonatal group B streptococcal sepsis; secondly, the management of acute asthma with regard to dose and duration of short courses of steroids; thirdly, the use or abuse of synthetic growth hormone; and lastly, and notably, the management of diabetes mellitus with regard to synthetic insulin and new techniques of administration.

Paediatric Therapeutics is a good source of reference with an extensive bibliography, although somewhat unbalanced and tedious to read from cover to cover. For libraries adequately stocked with standard paediatric texts it could be recommended as providing a 1990's update on a wide but selected range of paediatric topics with some emphasis on the scientific aspects of therapeutics.

HELEN LEWIS
Consultant paediatrician

Child Health and Surveillance. By Judith Moreton and Aidan MacFarlane. (Pp 196; £10.95 paperback.) Blackwell Scientific Publications, 1991. ISBN 0-632-01965-4.

A quick browse through the acknowledgements gives some indication of the range of topics that this little book attempts to cover. There is information here on subjects as diverse as examination of the newborn, athlete's foot, and the poll tax.

The first chapter is on familiar ground and covers routine physical examination of infants and young children and outlines a screening schedule. Growth, puberty, and the screening for problems of vision and hearing are dealt with. There are detailed descriptions of how to examine for undescended testes and dislocated hips, and a table for 'quick' developmental assessment.

The chapter on health education has useful advice on the management of sudden infant death and accident prevention. The inclusion of a section on the Children Act is timely, and the information on child abuse is sound. I was less impressed by the section on antenatal and perinatal prevention of death and handicap where basic general principles are lost in a welter of information on birth frequencies. Immunisation and feeding are well covered in the chapter on health promotion. However, the chapter on disability and handicap is disappointing, especially considering the importance of community care in these areas. It is somewhat redeemed by the list of useful addresses and advice on benefits.

Chapter five, 'Diseases and other problems', is a mixed bag. Information on incubation and isolation times is always handy to have, but I was puzzled by the inclusion of a long list of over the counter medicines. Do the authors recommend them, or are they warning us? Enuresis, school phobia, acne, and lots more are addressed under the heading of developmental problems. There is a section on the school medical service but only a brief mention of the child with special needs.

The book ends with a chapter on com-

munity issues and discusses topics such as homelessness, debt, and divorce. There is also a concise and comprehensive guide to social welfare benefits. A section on cultural considerations emphasises the importance of communication, but gives no advice on how best to use the services of interpreters.

It is impossible to please all of the people all of the time, and in trying to do just that this book runs into problems. It would not be my choice of a vade-mecum for community paediatrics, but I think it will appeal to a wide audience. I must point out one error that caught my attention: on page 15 we are told that precocious puberty is more common in boys, which it is not.

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The New Genetics and Clinical Practice. 3rd Ed. By D J Weatherall. (Pp 376; £15 paperback.) Oxford University Press, 1991. ISBN 0-19-261905-5.

If you have ever wondered what walking, jumping, YACs, and clones have to do with clinical medicine, this is your book. Professor Weatherall's style is user friendly, and assumes limited knowledge of molecular genetics on the part of his readers. As such, this is an excellent book both for the interested physician/paediatrician and as an introductory text for those planning a career in clinical genetics.

The definition of 'the new genetics' is given as the study of inheritance at the molecular level, and Professor Weatherall, after a general introduction to this subject illustrates the potential power of this science to help in the understanding, treatment, and prevention of disease in practically every area of clinical practice. He does this, as in the previous editions, by selecting a few well understood examples (primarily, the haemoglobinopathies) and taking us step by step through the normal molecular biology and pathology involved. Later chapters are devoted to carrier detection, prenatal diagnosis, and the future prospects for rational treatments using gene therapy.

Rapid advances have been made in this field in the past few years, with the results that many more conditions are now recognised as having a significant genetic component to their aetiology. After explaining the techniques of 'reverse genetics', which have been successfully used in the past to localise, map, and sequence genes responsible for many single gene disorders (using cystic fibrosis and Duchenne muscular dystrophy as examples), their potential application to polygenic conditions, such as hypertension, diabetes, and schizophrenia, is discussed. A chapter on the exciting developments in the field of cancer genetics is also included.

It is difficult to fault this popular and established book. Minor typographical errors are irritating and avoidable (see table on page 5). The inclusion of a glossary might be a useful addition in future editions, as some of the terms used will be unfamiliar to many readers. Overall, though, the book is a gem—readable, affordable, and informative—and no one, having read it, can be left in any doubt about the potential implications of the genetic revolution which is currently taking place.

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