REVIEWS


This monograph is based on a series of more than 100 affected babies observed during a five-year study of haemolytic disease of the newborn. To this firsthand experience of the condition Dr. Pickles brings a wide knowledge of the literature, whose mushroom growth in the last decade is evidenced by a bibliography of more than 350 references.

A historical survey of haemolytic disease is followed by a discussion of the Rhesus and other antigens and antibodies. The mechanism of immunization is considered, and the presentation of the clinical, serological and morbid anatomical features of blood group incompatibility is succeeded by a section on the many aspects of treatment. Prognosis and sequelae are dealt with, and there is an appendix on laboratory procedures.

This is a wholly admirable book, in which every attempt is made to write clearly on a subject of needless obscurity. To the many questions still under discussion Dr. Pickles brings an impartial mind, and she has refreshingly avoided any appearance of prejudice in her conclusions. The style is lucid and the book easy to read, and many doctors whose work deals with the neonatal period will be thankful for plain statements of facts which have often been lost in technical verbiage.


Professor Sjögren of the Karolinska Institute of Stockholm is well known for his painstaking and careful studies of the social implications of proven hereditary diseases. The present work is a clinical and genetic analysis of what can be considered the most complete case material on record in any one country. The authors were helped in their efforts by the up-to-date system of notification which exists in Sweden. All forms of blindness are notifiable there and, under the Act of 1896, education of blind children in special schools became compulsory. From 1930 onwards the type of disability had to be included in the census forms, which was an additional help from the standpoint of statistical assessment.

The occurrence of microphthalmos with coincident oligophrenia was first described in Great Britain by Ash in 1922, but not until 1937, when Fraser Roberts' interesting paper on 14 male cases appeared was a detailed genetic-statistical analysis undertaken. Professor Sjögren's monograph deals with a total of 137 proven cases of both types, and the histories cover the period between 1879 and 1946. He found that each of the two disabilities was responsible for 4% of the blind children in Sweden who reach school age. In the later chapters of this very methodical work the questions of sex distribution, mortality, other complicating disabilities, familial and geographical incidence are dealt with. Due prominence is given to aetiology and, in view of much recent controversy in this field, the problem of German measles during pregnancy is discussed. Generally speaking it is, in the author's view, not possible at present to determine the part which exogenous factors play in these disabilities.

This monograph is of outstanding interest to the paediatrician and psychiatrist who seek to combine the clinical, social, and genetic viewpoints. It can be recommended to all those who wish to undertake research on similar lines, because it clearly demonstrates the complexity of some of the problems which must be faced, if such research is going to be of practical value in the field of preventive medicine. The study contains a critical survey of the relevant literature as well as a full bibliography, and is written in clear English.

Epidemiology in Country Practice. By W. N. Pickles, M.D., Medical Officer of Health, Aysgarth Rural District, Bristol. 1949. John Wright & Sons, Ltd. Pp. 120. (Price 10s. 6d.)

This little classic was published in 1939. In 1941 the stock and type were destroyed by enemy action. It is now re-issued and will delight and stimulate paediatricians as well as general practitioners. The publishers state that the new edition is in exactly the same form as the first. There is actually a change in the plates. The first and third are from the same photographs as the original edition, but the reproduction of the first is less good and of the third more true in the current volume. The second plate is new and is yet more beautiful than the attractive but irrelevant view originally published.


The author's name on the title page of this volume is a warrant of its integrity and authority. In addition the book is concise and up to date, and may be read for pleasure. We have no hesitation in recommending Dr. Banks's work to children's physicians, for their own and their students' use.