BOOK REVIEWS


This book is the result of many years work in Highwood Hospital, which, before the start of the National Health Service, was the London County Council’s Children’s Sanatorium.

An immense amount of useful information supported by statistics is here set out most readily.

One thousand and forty-nine cases between 1942 and 1946 have been followed up during 1949-1952. One criticism perhaps is that the period of follow-up for a disease like tuberculosis is a little short. The feeling that primary tuberculosis carries a good prognosis is here substantiated; the mortality from haematogenous spread was 2%.

All sorts of interesting and useful points are made, such as the greater frequency of severe primary infection in boys, but of chronic pulmonary tuberculosis in girls; the fact that erythema nodosum denotes recent infection, but phylactenular conjunctivitis does not: that the vast majority of segmental collapses re-expand, but many leave some contraction; that absence of radiological evidence of primary infection does not exclude its presence, some such cases develop meningitis.

Bacillus Calmette-Guérin (B.C.G.) is only briefly mentioned, but the authors feel there is no evidence that vaccinated individuals develop chronic pulmonary tuberculosis less frequently than individuals infected naturally.

The statistics at the end of the book show that children with primary disease spent a mean period of 8-9 months in Highwood, and of this time a mean period of 18 weeks in bed. This seems to us to belie the authors’ conclusions in the chapter on the ‘Management of Primary Tuberculosis’, that ‘seldom should it be necessary to retain a child with simple primary tuberculosis in a sanatorium for a prolonged period’, or do they regard nearly nine months as a short period?

There is one other statement that appears to us to be contradictory. In one place they write that there is a correlation between the development and degree of calcification (which indicates previous caseation) of primary lesions, and the degree of exposure to infection. Later on they say 'the policy of separating young infected children from further exposure to infection at home does not appear to be based on any sound foundation'.

Apart from these small criticisms the book is of great value and will remain, we believe, for many years a standard work for those interested in tuberculosis in children.


This is an invaluable pamphlet on the cause and current opinions on the epidemiology of infantile paralysis. There is also a section on the isolation and identification of the viruses concerned. The treatment of poliomyelitis is not under consideration.

The first half of the report discusses the disease in relation to its mode of spread and will be much appreciated by all those who are concerned with the handling of epidemics. In the light of the knowledge that the condition may start as a viraemia and that the virus is excreted in the faeces for a matter of weeks after the onset of the disease, measures to be taken with regard to the safety of the community are presented. Current methods of active and passive immunization against poliomyelitis are stated clearly, and there is a warning that these methods are all very much at the experimental stage of development.

Appendices discuss briefly the laboratory methods of isolation and identification of the three strains of poliomyelitis virus, while there is a list of the leading references to tissue culture techniques which are today employed.

The Expert Committee have done good service in producing this report which will be of interest to a wide range of people concerned with the disease. Technical language and preciousness are avoided and possibly the outstanding merit of the publication is its simple and comprehensive method of presentation.


Paediatricians receiving this annual volume will usually turn first to see what has been selected for summary in their own field. The main topics this year are fibrocystic disease of the pancreas (also chosen for mention in the editorial introduction), infant feeding, hiatus hernia, recurrent parotitis and primary tuberculosis of the skin. The sections dealing with these are in the safe hands of Dr. G. H. Newns. It is likely, however, that paediatricians use the Annual more to see what is going on in other fields, related or not related, to their daily work. In the former category may be mentioned several excellent annotations on acute infectious diseases by Dr. H. Stanley Banks. There are also good sections on poliomyelitis, on retrovalent fibroplasia, and on subdural haematoma. For general consideration may be listed the sections on orthopaedics and on therapeutics. Production, printing, illustrations and index have been maintained at the usual high standard.