BOOK REVIEWS


Since the first edition of this useful little book in 1952 there have not only been many advances in our knowledge of poliomyelitis and its viruses, but there have also occurred on the one hand the outstandingly disastrous Copenhagen epidemic which brought forth a reassessment of the treatment of bulbar types of poliomyelitis, and on the other, the elaboration of a protective vaccination. It follows that this second edition had to be largely rewritten.

The book makes no claim to be an exhaustive textbook on the disease, but nevertheless the author has managed, in under 150 pages, to give a very comprehensive account of every important aspect. Management and treatment occupy, quite rightly, nearly two-thirds of the subject matter, and these sections are models of quality and of economical and arresting writing, and of the use of carefully chosen illustrations and diagrams. Here also, as throughout the book, the thumbnail sketches of cases to illustrate points in the text are valuable, both as instruction and to maintain interest. The care of cases of poliomyelitis during the acute stage has largely been given over to the infectious diseases hospitals. It is doubtful, as the author clearly indicates, whether this is in the best interests of the patients, or whether it is epidemiologically justified, but what is quite sure is that the loss to teaching hospitals of this experience will be reflected in a widespread ignorance in the disease by practitioners who have not during their studies had the opportunity to recognize the symptomatology or to observe the principles of treatment. When the inevitable epidemic overtakes them, and they have perforce to deal with a host of diagnostic problems, and also perhaps to treat many mild cases in their own homes, they will do so all the more adequately for having this handy and near perfect little book ready on the shelf.

The production is excellent and on excellent paper. The illustrations are unusually successful in illustrating the points they intend to make. There are some 90 references, most of them up to date, and a somewhat sketchy index.


This is an excellent eye-witness account by 21 experts and Professor Lassen himself, who has also edited the whole, of the terrifying outbreak of poliomyelitis which occurred in Copenhagen in 1952. At one time, for several weeks, 30 to 50 patients a day were pouring into the Blegdam Hospital of whom six to 12 were drowning in their own secretions. The situation called for improvisation and emergency measures. It is now well known how the method of tracheotomy and insertion of the cuffed intratracheal tube came to be chosen. This book tells in detail how this was done and why, and the results obtained. It also deals with much more in the whole care of the patient with acute poliomyelitis, including the management of the convalescent stage. (In the list of contributors there is no mention of an orthopaedic surgeon!) There is also an excellent summary of necropsy findings. Anyone concerned with the care of patients with this disease will find this a fascinating and hopeful book. It is hoped it will become of historical value only, for Denmark is well ahead with vaccination of its population under 40 years of age with a poliomyelitis vaccine. Dr. Thomas Anderson of Glasgow has assisted with the translation undertaken by Professor Lassen and two Danish colleagues.


Although only five years have elapsed since Professor Ellis's book first appeared, the general advances in paediatric knowledge occurring in this span of time have necessitated a thorough revision of the first edition. The changing face of paediatrics is mirrored in the long section devoted to congenital malformations; prenatal infection has a chapter devoted to it, and disorders of storage and growth are considered extensively. These aspects of paediatrics become yearly more important as the infections of childhood are brought under control. In the same way neoplastic disease is increasing in importance and is dealt with fully. The illustrations throughout really do contribute to the understanding of the text, the book is beautifully made and printed and is as much a pleasure to handle as its contents are to read.


That a third edition of this handbook should have been called for since the first edition appeared in 1949 is a sign both of the rapid advance of medicine and the need for a book dealing with the treatment of acute emergencies in childhood. Further evidence of the book's popularity is that it has now been translated into Italian and Spanish. This third edition has been expanded to include newer disease syndromes and newer treatments, and is an up-to-date and comprehensive presentation of emergency treatment. There is a table of doses of drugs likely to be used in emergency and it is to be hoped that in the fourth edition a column will be included explaining what some of the proprietary names listed indicate.


This is not a monograph on the subject, but a brief, practical treatise on the early diagnosis, prevention and treatment of congenital syphilis based on the author's personal experience of the vast clinical material available in Germany in the early post-war years.