

BOOK REVIEWS

Handbook of Pediatric Medical Emergencies, 2nd ed. By ADOLPH G. DESANCTIS, with the collaboration of CHARLES VARGA and ten contributors. (Pp. 398; 73 figures. 46s.) London: Henry Kimpton. 1956.

Emergencies in children tend to be emergencies indeed, and with the increase of effective drugs, and of exact methods both of diagnosis and of controlling treatment, the need for a practical book on paediatric emergencies has increased. This book provides for that need admirably. It goes a little beyond the requirements of the emergency, but does not set out to be a complete textbook of paediatrics. It does, however, cover the whole field, from the point of view of the house physician, registrar, or general practitioner, rather than from that of the visiting paediatrician or surgeon.

The sections on water, electrolytes, diarrhoea and vomiting, etc., on which so much advance has been made, are most useful. In all sections there is a proper stressing of those clinical findings on which emergency diagnosis must be based, as opposed to the stress on laboratory investigations so often found in American textbooks. The details of dosage are full and simple.

Perhaps the best feature of the book is the section on paediatric procedure (vein puncture, paracentesis, oxygen therapy, marrow puncture, etc.), which is profusely illustrated and so made instantly and completely comprehensible. Being printed on highly-glazed paper, the book is heavy, and unless it is kept on the spot where emergencies are seen it is likely not to be there when wanted. But it could lie on the back seat of a car without inconvenience.

The sections on the treatment of poisoning is a little old-fashioned. Treatment by antidotes, although logically excellent, is in practice disappointing. Better results are given by the more general treatment started in this country by Dr. Marriott at the Middlesex, concentrating on the treatment of the very few processes by which poisoned patients die, and keeping them alive until they get the better of the poison. There is, however, an excellent appendix on the chemical nature of poisonous substances met with in the home and garden. It is always valuable to know with what one is dealing.

The emergencies dealt with are, for the most part, common to all countries and to all people, without any special American aspect. Such things as snake-bites are not so common in this country, and although details of treatment are superfluous it is perhaps comforting to appreciate that one is not likely to be bitten from behind by a black widow spider in the closet in this country.

Altogether this book deals thoroughly with a subject on which a book is welcome.

Paediatric X-ray Diagnosis, 3rd ed. By JOHN CAFFEY. (Pp. xxiv.+1059; 1,267 figures. 210s.; \$28.00). Chicago: The Year Book Publishers; distributed in the U.K. by Interscience Publishers. 1956.

Dr. John Caffey's book has been the standard work of reference for all those interested in children's radiographs since its first appearance in 1945. The many excellent qualities of the book must largely explain the fact that it still has no real rival in the English language despite the great extensions of scope and knowledge of paediatric radiology there have been in the past decade.

The present edition is a worthwhile advance on its predecessor. A variety of new subjects has been included and many sections in the last edition have been enlarged. The text has been expanded by nearly 200 pages. It is easy to read and understand. The illustrations have been increased in number by 228. They are again of the highest quality. The book is heavy (6 lb. 8½ oz.) and the binding does not seem to be quite strong enough for such a load, particularly when the high cost is borne in mind.

Dr. Caffey is at his best when dealing with bone and the various sections devoted to normal or abnormal bone make up almost exactly half the book. The odd radiological appearances produced by normal anatomical variations and the importance of not confusing these with pathological changes are, once again, rightly stressed. It is to the sections on bone and its diseases that the experienced paediatric radiologist will still find he likes to refer. He will find less of practical value in the other sections though these are full of information for the student and the relatively inexperienced.

The comparative weakness of such sections as that on heart disease is due partly to the omission of the details of the special techniques on which paediatric radiology now depends so much. Dr. Caffey regards most of the techniques as beyond the scope of the book. This may be so, but the omission of practical details of how such techniques are performed and of how their results are interpreted together with a lack of detailed consideration of differential diagnosis leaves little of value to anyone with the responsibility of making a precise diagnosis in a difficult case.

It seems a pity that on one of the few occasions when there is a description of the technique of an investigation—encephalography—few of the practical details which make all the difference between success and failure are mentioned, and, in any event, the method described is completely out of date and would be best avoided by anyone undertaking this examination.

The few paragraphs on partial thoracic stomach are of