BOOK REVIEWS


The field of infectious diseases of children is such a rapidly changing one that frequent appraisal of the position is desirable. Occasionally with delay in publication techniques of treatment have changed or new diagnostic methods become available.

This compact book presents a reasoned summary of all the common infections of childhood from the standpoint of the clinician. The material is presented under five headings: infections in the newborn, infectious or communicable diseases, infections of the nervous system, virus diseases, and non-virus respiratory infections. It is not intended to replace the standard textbooks to which reference for detail of diagnosis and treatment is recommended.

Where diagnostic laboratory facilities are available, their aid in problems of childhood is at times invaluable. This book omits reference to the laboratory diagnosis of smallpox. In cases of purulent meningitis a firm diagnosis and guide to treatment is frequently available from blood culture when the cerebrospinal fluid has not provided an organism. This might have been commented upon in the diagnosis of these conditions.

The absence of diagrams and illustrations is commendable in a book of this nature in which the text is essentially concise. The book will prove of value to public health workers, family doctors and students.

Tuberculosis in White and Negro Children.
Vol. I. By Janet B. Hardy. The Roentgenologic Aspects of the Harriet Lane Study. (Pp. vii+122; illustrated. 60s.)

This work comes from the Harriet Lane Tuberculosis Clinic of the Johns Hopkins Hospital and was initiated by Dr. Edwards Park in 1928. The first volume, by Dr. Janet Hardy, is a beautifully produced book; it begins with a succinct account of the anatomy of the thoracic lymphatic system and the tracheo-bronchial tree. This is followed by 240 illustrations, 230 of which are radiographs, describing the normal variations, non-tuberculous conditions which must be differentiated, and the serial x-ray stories of many of the patients. There is a final section on bronchoscopy and bronchography, their indications and contra-indications and the techniques available. Everything about this book is first class; all the illustrations are outstandingly good and as an atlas it is a mine of information for reference.

The second volume, by Dr. Miriam Brailey, deals with the prognosis and statistics of the patients studied. The author attempts to determine the prognosis of tuberculous infection in children in the form of a statistical analysis based on the records of 1,329 children, 437 white and 892 negro, investigated in the Harriet Lane Tuberculosis Clinic between 1928 and 1945. Follow-up was continued till 1950.

The story of the planning of the investigation and of the results obtained is clearly and interestingly unfolded. Details are given of the initial chest x-ray findings, the incidence of extrapulmonary lesions, the mortality according to age, sex, initial findings and intrafamilial exposure. There were 140 deaths from tuberculosis, 20 among the white children and 120 among the negroes and, in addition, 40 children, 15 white and 25 negro, died from conditions other than tuberculosis.

The mortality was 9% for white children and 22% for negroes in those cases where initial infection occurred before the age of 3 years. When infection was first discovered after the age of 3 years, the mortality was 0-8% for white children and 8% for negroes. In the first group 78% of the deaths were due to tuberculous meningitis with or without miliary involvement, 12% to post-primary tuberculous pneumonia and 5% to reinfection pulmonary tuberculosis. In the second group 39% of deaths were due to meningitis, 5% to tuberculous pneumonia and 50% to reinfection pulmonary tuberculosis.

In investigating the risk of developing reinfection pulmonary tuberculosis it was found that the annual reinfection rate in the white children was only 0-034%, whereas in the negroes it was 0-33%. Further, the mortality rate in these cases was much higher in negroes and the risk of reinfection in girls was five times greater than in boys. Where exposure was continued after primary infection the incidence of reinfection within a 10-year period was three times higher than in those who escaped subsequent exposure. It is clear, therefore, that although reinfection in white children presents no real problem this does not hold true for negroes (and other susceptible subjects) in whom reinfection increases the risk of the development of phthisis.

Despite the fact that the picture described here has been completed changed as a result of chemotherapy and B.C.G., it nevertheless merits study for it is full of valuable information, the story of a well planned co-operative effort, and of considerable historical interest.

It is to be warmly commended to all interested in the study of the many facets of childhood tuberculosis.