
This is another in the series of monographs published by Georg Thieme, Stuttgart, and it maintains the standard commonly expected of their publications. The study is based on experience gained from 680 cases of tetany seen in the first medical and paediatric clinics of the university over a period of 12 years in postwar Vienna. It suggests an extraordinarily high incidence of the disease, even for Vienna which had earned the epithet 'tetany city' many years ago.

Unfortunately the author omits a statistical analysis of his material which might have provided a great deal of interesting information, in particular for the paediatrician. The rachitogenic form still ranks high in his account of tetany in childhood although Dr. Jesserer admits that it has lost somewhat in numerical significance. This is surprising as rickets and this type of tetany have practically disappeared in this country.

The classification of the tetany syndrome of the adult is also applied to the child with only minor variations. In the hypocalcaemic group are included the rachitogenic, enterogenous and hypoparathyroid forms as well as tetany complicating renal disease and following the administration of cation exchange resins. In the normocalcaemic groups are listed idiopathic tetany, tetany resulting from organic brain lesions, hyperventilation, infections, poisonings and loss of chloride ions due to excessive vomiting.

A short chapter deals with tetany in the neonatal period.

Dr. Jesserer insists on limiting the term tetany to conditions presenting at one time or another the characteristic tetanic spasms as an expression of the increased neuromuscular irritability, and he separates an 'idiopathic' tetany from the symptomatic variations. Idiopathic tetany occurs in young adults or adolescents; the blood calcium is within normal range, and its pathogenesis is attributed to increased irritability of cerebral centres.

Reading of the book is made a little cumbersome through the interpolation of large numbers of case records, some of purely historical interest and taken from the earlier literature on the subject. Only a quarter of the book is devoted to tetany in the young—understandably, as the author is a physician with limited paediatric interests.

On the whole this is a good review of the subject and over 600 references provide the background.


The tenth volume of this series is perhaps topical in that two of the seven articles deal with psychological principles in paediatric practice and convulsive disorders in infants and children. Dr. Sabin's review of the prevention of poliomyelitis by vaccination epitomises the problems and progress made in this subject but contains little for the up-to-date paediatrician. Papers on the treatment of tuberculosis, staphylococcal infections in nurseries and muscular disorders of childhood follow the usual lines, and there is a short but valuable section on the transfer of antibodies from mother to child from Vahlquist.

This annual, or nearly annual, collection of review articles by leading authorities serves a useful purpose in ensuring that the children's doctor short of reading time can, with the minimum of study, keep himself aware of what and where the growing edge of paediatrics is, while the references following each paper enable him to look up in the original publications any points on which he needs further information.

Many of the juicier subjects have already been dealt with in earlier volumes, and perhaps the time is nearing when some form of 'Noter-up' such as is produced by Gaisford and Lightwood for Paediatrics for the Practitioner will be desirable for Advances in Pediatrics. A growing point in paediatrics does not cease growth merely because a topical review article has been written about it, and the editor of Advances in Pediatrics must certainly be wondering when, in the light of very recent advances, he will have to commission articles on subjects already discussed in earlier volumes of the series.