BOOK REVIEWS


Many paediatricians on both sides of the Atlantic are concerning themselves more and more with the child's view of the world, and in particular with the ways in which the developing human organism adapts with varying success to his crises and anxieties. When this experiential aspect of child development is studied there are apt to be consequences for the observer of a rather unique and personal kind: the realization that some of the child's problems are still active in ourselves. This is among the most significant of the problems facing contemporary paediatrics. What are the repercussions on training of the need for an awareness of the factors underlying the behaviour of children and the paediatrician's work on himself which this entails? This is one of the major themes of Dr. Winnicott's book.

Together with his three other recent publications (Winnicott, 1957a; 1957b; 1958) this book should be available wherever paediatrics and the training of paediatricians are seriously discussed. Barbara Korsch's admirable summary of the relevant American literature should be added to this list (Korsch, 1958).

The lucidity and freshness of approach with which Dr. Winnicott writes need no emphasis here. Many of the articles are among the rather rare British contributions to the classics of paediatric psychiatry, e.g. Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena.

References


This useful manual on the growth and development of children is now appearing in its third edition. There have been numerous alterations and almost every chapter has been extensively revised, whilst that on the role of endocrines has been rewritten. The book is aimed at the student wanting to learn and the practitioner, general and paediatric, needing a handy reference book, and as such it is adequate for its purpose. Its range is comprehensive, namely from the newly fertilized gamete to adolescence. Growth is described organ by organ and amply illustrated by figures, charts and graphs; heredity and environment and their inter-relationships are mentioned, and so are energy metabolism and the nutritional needs from all stages of foetal life onwards; endocrine factors, emotional, psychological and behavioural development, each have a chapter, and finally there is a not very useful chapter on abnormal growth. All this in 300 pages! Indeed perhaps too much has been attempted, and some chapters have suffered as a result.

Material and many of the graphs, charts and figures have been taken from the literature or borrowed from units throughout the countries on both sides of the Atlantic so that the book makes no pretence of contributing original work. It remains, however, a useful quick book of reference on many aspects of the main themes of growth and development in children.


The topics chosen for the meeting of which this volume represents the proceedings were: blood and plasma fractions; blood and plasma transfusion in paediatrics; and the medico-legal aspects of transfusion. A series of papers and a short discussion on each of these subjects are followed by a miscellaneous collection of papers on other aspects of blood transfusion.

The subjects of the six papers in the paediatric section range from the purely social aspect of erythroblasticosis to details of laboratory technique. Had they been more closely linked, a composite picture of German views on exchange transfusion or some other aspect of transfusion in childhood might have emerged; individually, these disparate contributions add little to our knowledge of their subjects, which are already well covered in various standard monographs.

The other sections will be of interest chiefly to those who have to deal with the laboratory aspects of blood transfusion; amongst those papers which are also of clinical interest may be mentioned that of van Loghem and his associates on leucocyte antibodies as a cause of transfusion reactions and a short review (in French) of the problems of platelet transfusion by Eyquem and Maupin.


This work is the edited report of a conference held at the University of Puerto Rico in 1956 and attended by...
28 American research workers in the fields of anatomy, physiology, psychology, paediatrics, obstetrics and neurology.

There are 13 chapters concerned with the physiology, pathology, and effects of anoxia at or before birth in producing cerebral palsy and mental deficiency, two chapters devoted to the behaviour of infant monkeys and their breeding and care, and four to the recorded proceedings of round table conferences.

Of the greatest interest are those chapters concerned with experimental neonatal asphyxia in animals, mainly guinea-pigs. But species differences are such that more will be learned in relation to human problems by experimental studies on other primates, and Dr. Windle and his colleagues are now undertaking such investigations with Macaca monkeys established as a free living colony on the island of Santiago off Puerto Rico. To assess the effects of neonatal asphyxia, special tests have had to be devised to measure intelligence and learning abilities in animals and these are described in relation to both guinea-pigs and monkeys.

This is an important book and could be read with profit by all concerned with problems of the newborn infant. Over 500 references are listed.

One minor protest must be entered. In his foreword Dr. E. Harold Hinnman depleos the fact that 3% of the population of the United States (that is, nearly 5 millions) are considered as mentally retarded. But, for as long as a mentally retarded person is defined as one whose intelligence is less than two standard deviations from the mean for the population, there will always be 3% of any population who are ‘mentally retarded’. It would be as true to say, and as absurd to depleos, that 50% of the population was below average intelligence.


This is a monograph covering all aspects of the Guillain-Barré polyradiculitis, its history, clinical manifestations and complications, differential diagnosis, its multiple aetiology, its pathology and treatment. The work is well arranged and plentifully illustrated by case histories, and some 800 references are listed. Even in a monograph of this size some aspects of the subject receive scant attention. For instance, the important complication of raised intracranial pressure is discussed in one short paragraph, corticosteroid therapy is described by reference to the literature, but not apparently from personal experience, and the life-saving treatment of respiratory paralysis is allotted seven lines.

The original description of polyradiculitis with ‘dissociation albumino-cytologique’ in the cerebrospinal fluid was by G. Guillain, J. Barré and A. Strohl in 1916.

Why has Dr. Strohl not received eponymous fame? There must be a story behind this.


This book or monograph is addressed, the preface tells us, to residents in the Blue Bird Circle Children's Clinic, Houston, Texas, and is based primarily on the collected experiences of the Clinic since its inception in 1949. It is in fact a simple and concise account of childhood convulsions and is admirably suited, as a vademecum, to final year students, house physicians and candidates for general medical and paediatric examinations. It is well written, beautifully produced, and incorporates excellent short illustrative case reports. At the end there is a table relating to the indications, dosage, toxicity, etc. of 15 drugs in common use. The authors seem curiously uninterested in prognosis, about which nothing is said, or in the social implications of epilepsy in relation, for instance, to parents and family or to schooling. The chapter on electro-encephalography describes clearly the common abnormal patterns but omits a description of the normal tracings. On the whole it is a useful little book to have at hand, but is perhaps rather expensive at 42s.


This monograph is based on the clinical experience of 214 cases of muscular dystrophy seen since 1948. The authors divide the condition into three clinically and prognostically distinct groups: (1) ascending infantile progressive muscular dystrophy; (2) the more benign scapulo-humeral and facio-scalpulo-humeral forms; and (3) atypical forms including the ‘para musculodystrophies’, myotonia dystrophy, etc.

Much stress is laid throughout on the necessity for close collaboration between the paediatrician, the neurologist, the orthopaedic surgeon and the dietician, and they emphasize that a positive approach is essential in this condition.

Drug therapy with prostigmine, vitamin E, choline, glutamic acid, etc., and special diets are regarded as merely supportive though of some importance, but early diagnosis and early physiotherapeutic and orthopaedic treatment are essential.

The illustrations are clear. Some details of the biochemical disturbances and the genetic basis of some of the cases are given. A useful reference list is appended.

This is a useful monograph setting out the experiences of one team of workers but one which does not really add anything very new to our understanding of this group of conditions.