BOOK REVIEWS

Organic illness is diminishing. The well-nurtured child often presents psychosomatic problems. Clinical and psychiatric views must be correlated. The book convinces one that the good doctor must understand psyche and soma.


The first edition of this well-known book was published in 1945 and a new edition has appeared almost every three years. The whole book has been revised and the chief alterations are to be found in the chapter on complications, so that sections on atelectasis, kermikerus, staphylococcal infections and antibiotics have been rewritten, as also the chapter on mortality due to prematurity.

There are eight chapters dealing with definition and characteristics, management and care, hospital care, home care, clothing, feeding, complications liable to occur in the premature baby, and prevention of mortality due to prematurity; and finally there is an Appendix with statistics from the Sorrento Maternity Hospital. The titles sound simple, but there is a wealth of information, and for those who want more there are good references at the end of most chapters. This book is small, well printed and very easy to read, and reasonably priced; and all those many people interested in and working with small babies should possess this new edition.

Since it is hoped that there will be new hospitals, it would be most helpful if someone like Dr. Mary Crosse would devote a chapter to the problem of the creation of a new premature or special baby care unit, perhaps in the next edition.


This excellently produced book contains over 100 scientific papers from 40 countries, presented to an international goitre conference. As indicated in the title, the stress is heavily on research; and nowadays in the thyroid field that involves the use of isotopes, mainly I-131. Paper after paper deals with some investigation carried out with this material, and this makes for difficult reading by those unfamiliar with the necessary techniques. A great deal of the work is concerned with the biochemistry of the iodine-containing compounds present in the thyroid, and this is wellnigh unintelligible except to the experts who use this vocabulary as an everyday tool. The book is intended for specialists and for them it will be invaluable. No need to search the 'relevant literature', it is all here. A good deal of the research reported is repetitive; and this enhances its value to the expert, for similar results obtained from three or four widely separated countries are very unlikely to be at fault. It is a measure of the complexity of the subject, that, in spite of the massive endeavour herein documented, so much still remains to be discovered, e.g. we still do not know just how thyroxin exerts its specific effect.

There are a few papers of interest even to the clinical paediatrician: two of them are on simple goitre with congenital deafness (Pendred's syndrome); a perplexing contribution on the persistence of hyperthyroidism even after complete destruction of the pituitary; a study of exophthalmos in Graves' disease, demonstrating that thyrotoxicosis and the eye changes are entirely independent of each other; an interesting series of papers on endemic goitre from different regions: Sheffield, Argentina, Switzerland, Jugoslavia; a collection of 556 thyroid carcinomata in children, and a couple of fascinating (but difficult) articles on endemic cretinism, which show that lack of iodine and aplasia of the thyroid are by no means the whole story and that some cretins are actually euthyroid.

In addition to the scientific contributions, the book includes the presidential address, an historical survey by the late president of the American Goiter Association, and the Dunhill Memorial Lecture. This latter, by Sir Geoffrey Keynes, is a labour of love and a joy to read.


In order to keep its public abreast of recent developments in therapeutics, the British Medical Journal has for some time contained a weekly contribution dealing with some aspect of newer drugs and their administration. These have now been brought together in one volume obtainable for 35s. Without being exhaustive, the contributors have contrived to cover a large section of the treatment of medical conditions. This collection of papers, therefore, will find a ready public which can bring itself up to date with the minimum of trouble on the treatment of a great number of conditions with many therapeutic agents. Of particular interest to paediatricians are articles on 'Sedatives for Children' by R. S. Illingworth, 'Pneumonia in Children' by W. F. Gaisford, and 'Paediatric Prescribing' by the latter. While they will not benefit in their speciality by reading the article on 'Prescribing for Old People', they will, nevertheless, in most of the sections find a great deal that bears on their subject or which has direct application to children and childhood diseases.


This book from the Gothenburg obstetric hospitals illustrates the benefits of sharing a complex problem between various disciplines. Four differently treated large groups of pregnant diabetic women are compared; the best results, both for mothers and children, were obtained by team work, with consistent and strict supervision and meticulous control of the diabetic state.
throughout pregnancy. The outlook for the newborn child of a diabetic mother is largely determined by prenatal factors, and doctors must begin to think about its welfare long before it is born. The author shows that many disorders, such as hypocalcaemia, hyperbilirubinaemia, retention of fluid and sodium, and pulmonary hyaline membrane, are not directly associated with maternal diabetes but are largely attributable to immaturity. In consequence the most effective way of reducing infant morbidity and mortality is to deliver the mothers as late as possible, while good medical and obstetric care reduces considerably the risk of intrauterine foetal death. The chapter on the care of the newborn contains nothing that will be new to paediatricians in this country, but the problems are clearly set out and discussed.

The English is lucid and the text well printed and bound. As a presentation of a complex and still rather empirical subject, this book, with its excellent bibliography, is well worth the attention of paediatricians; but one cannot help wondering why, with 84 pages of text, it should cost 54 shillings.


This is one of the admirable series of monographs from Scandinavian departments of medical genetics, which survey all the patients with a particular disorder in a whole country. The survey includes all the cases in Sweden of osteogenesis imperfecta, covering clinical, genetic, epidemiological and socio-medical aspects. It has, therefore, much in common with Seedorff's 1949 survey of the cases in Denmark; but it is a feature of genetic studies that such repetition is valuable and clarifies earlier findings. The total number of cases studied was 274, of whom 190 were investigated personally by the authors.

Discussing the genetics of their patients, the authors show that probably all cases, including the sporadic, are due to dominant mutant genes. As is usual with conditions inherited in this way, there is much variation in the clinical picture. But the variation within families is significantly less than the variation between families, which strongly suggests that more than one mutant gene is concerned. In particular, the relatively rare forms without blue sclerotics appear to be genetically distinct. Patients without blue sclerotics also rarely showed an arcus corneae, never had the tendency to bruise easily, and less often had joint laxity. In the whole series, there was only one family which included both patients with and without blue sclerotics. There is no evidence that the sporadic lethal cases are due to recessive mutant genes, and there is no instance of parental consanguinity. The survey of the social aspects of the disease shows that many of the affected individuals manage to do useful work in spite of their handicaps, although, understandably, most of them are in sedentary jobs, such as watch-making, engraving, instrument making, tailoring and shoe-repairing.


This book was written by the chief of the laboratories of the Board of Health of the City of Chicago for persons starting to work in clinical laboratories. The text is predominantly concerned with the fundamental use of routine laboratory equipment and the general technical principles underlying laboratory procedures.

The author is not a medical person, and the sections dealing with balances and chemical equipment are treated much more thoroughly and adequately than are any other branches of the laboratory.

There is a useful section on ordering chemicals. The chapter on first aid is essentially a standard first aid handbook and not sufficiently orientated to the small emergencies in the laboratory, e.g. formalin in the eye. It is surprising that he recommends carbon tetrachloride for routine cleaning of microtomes.

The laboratory technician in Chicago, unlike his colleague in this country, is expected to record electrocardiographs and to carry out clinical procedures on patients, including catheterization and duodenal intubation. The paediatrician will be pleased to hear that the technician is advised not to puncture the superior longitudinal sinus or the femoral vein of a baby except in the presence of a physician!