BOOK REVIEWS


Every good paediatrician knows that he should be a child psychiatrist, but he also knows how far he falls short of this ideal. Here is a book that can help him. It can also help child psychiatrists to become good paediatricians, and it is the balance between these two aspects of clinical medicine that makes it an outstanding book. It does not set out to be a textbook of paediatrics, but rather to stress the need for a psychosomatic attitude to all paediatric problems. This comprehensive approach is needed, as the authors state in their preface, not only in 'psychosomatic disorders', but in all illness, whether common or rare, acute or chronic, trivial or lethal.

It is essentially a practical book which deals with a host of conditions commonly encountered in practice. The chapter headings remind one of any ordinary out-patient session: recurrent pain, recurrent pyrexia, enuresis, obesity, common handicaps are only a few.

It is unusual for a medical book to be written in such simple and delightful English. To read it is to combine business with pleasure and it can be recommended to all whose work is concerned with sick children.


This book is the record of papers read at the Johns Hopkins Conference on Research Needs and Prospects in Dyslexia and Related Aphasric Disorders, held in Baltimore in November 1961. The authors include psychiatrists, neurologists, psychologists, a paediatrician, an otolaryngologist and two directors of remedial centres. In one paper the cases of dyslexia are divided into three major groupings:

1. Cases due to exogenous factors such as limited schooling, emotional blocking; these were diagnosed as 'secondary reading retardation'.

2. Cases with clear-cut neurological deficits, diagnosed as 'brain injury with reading retardation'.

3. Endogenous cases with 'diminished ability to integrate the meaningfulness of written material', diagnosed as 'primary reading retardation'.

All the papers make it clear that it is the last two groupings that are under discussion. The authors have discussed the problem of dyslexia as it appears in their own spheres of interest.

The teachers' observations of reversals, right-left confusion, transposition and omission of words are described. An account is given of a remedial programme in the Baltimore County Public Schools. A preliminary report on a survey into the incidence of the problem suggests that 17% of a school population are retarded in reading. A psychiatrist has emphasized that the case is rarely one of pure dyslexia, but that there are underlying visual and auditory defects and possibly body image confusion. Defects in form perception, directional sense and right-left discrimination are mentioned and the possibility of a fundamentally ill-defined cerebral dominance as a factor in some dyslexic children. The site of the lesion in brain-damaged cases is suggested from a study of adult cases. One paper describes an association of reading disability with mild choreiform movements of limbs and eyes due to brain damage following an early history suggesting cerebral injury.

This collection of papers has given an excellent representation of the whole problem and must be a reference book for anyone studying the subject.


Every new branch of medical science, as it grows, begets a series of new words, familiar to those who grow up with the science but strange and not readily tripping off the tongues of those preoccupied elsewhere; and on a rock of nomenclature the enthusiasm of many would-be learners often flounders. For example, the confusion over the Rh factor terminology just after the last World War had to be experienced at first-hand to be believed; and it was not until someone enunciated the basic fact that blood groups were different and could act as antigens that the mystique became less mysterious and the subject more easily understood.

In the last few years the science of human genetics has taken such strides forward that it warrants the respect due to a speciality in its own right. As such it has inevitably evolved its own terms and jargon. Dr. Cedric Carter has got to timely grips with this new subject and in Human Heredity he explains gently the science of genetics, not only to the layman but to the doctor who has not been able to keep abreast of its development. He deals
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simply with his subject matter from twins, genes and the sex chromosomes, to the inheritance of height, build and intelligence. Gene mutations, genetic predisposition and congenital deformities are examined and illuminated and there is a final chapter on eugenics.

To the few practising geneticists this book will contain little new, but to the average seeker after knowledge a lot is explained in a small compass. Obviously much remains in the field of genetics for which an adequate explanation is not yet available, but what is known is faithfully dealt with and Dr. Carter is to be congratulated on his successful attempt to make what might be a difficult subject intelligible to the uninformed.


This is a slim, handy volume, well printed and well produced. The authors review the problems of rhesus incompatibility in an admirably concise and practical manner.

The chapters are usefully set out in the form of replies to various problems posed by the different aspects of rhesus incompatibility. This common-sense approach is matched by the simple and clear writing. Nevertheless, the subject is treated in considerable detail, the one thing missing that might profitably have been included being some statistics of incidence of the rhesus negative and similar blood groups from various parts of the world and of blood incompatibility as a problem.

The references are up to date, international and comprehensive.


This is the second volume of a series of Pathological Monographs, edited by Sir Roy Cameron and G. Payling Wright, that are designed to present comprehensive reviews of subjects of particular interest at the present time. Professor Willis’s contribution very well fulfils that aim. It provides a large and well-chosen bibliography that adequately covers the literature on tumours of children. But it is much more than a review of the literature. As in all his written work, the author draws upon his own vast experience in the field of oncology, and quotes many illustrative cases from his own collection, and from the Manchester Children’s Tumour Registry and the Tumour Reference Section of the Imperial Cancer Research Fund, with both of which he is intimately connected. The book therefore bears the stamp of authority that can come only from the first-hand experience of the writer; and when controversial points are raised, the author’s opinions are given in his usual refreshingly forthright manner.

The earlier chapters deal with the types of neoplasm that are commonest in, and most nearly peculiar to, children: those of nervous tissues, the embryonic tumours of particular organs and the teratomas. A useful section follows on tumours arising in hamartomas and in vestigial and ectopic tissues. Tumours of haemopoietic tissues are sometimes briefly discussed. In the later chapters those of bone and other mesenchymal tissues, those of the endocrine organs and gonads, the relatively rare epithelial cancers, and some miscellaneous and controversial tumours, some probably not true neoplasms, are reviewed. A wide field is thus covered in this small volume which is illustrated by many photographs in black and white. It does not give detailed descriptions of histological characters, some knowledge of which in the reader is obviously presupposed. The author’s style is clear and concise and eminently pleasant to read. The printing is good and almost free from misprints, and reproduction of the illustrations is excellent.


This paper-back book of 195 pages records the proceedings of a meeting of the Paediatric Society of Valencia which was held in May 1962. The subject was otitis in infancy and there were eight contributors who covered authoritatively the statistical, morphological, clinical and otological aspects, the overall effects of otitis in infancy, methods of prevention and the current medical and otological treatment recommended. The final chapter records the discussion which followed the papers. There are some excellent full-page replicas of the slides which accompanied the lectures; these help considerably in understanding the text. Also, as an offset to the photographs of the contributors, which appear at the beginning of their papers, there are some excellent pre- and post-treatment photographs of infants.

The subject is covered exhaustively and the paper on the varying symptomatology of infantile otitis by Dr. Lola Gallego is particularly valuable. The only notable omission is the references, which in the contributors’ views may be obtained from them on request; it would have added to the usefulness of this volume if they could have been included.

The book is well produced and the text easy to read. The publication within six months of the meeting is an achievement of which the Society and the publishers may be proud.


Volume 5/6 of this attractive journal is devoted to a refresher course in paediatric orthopaedics. The six papers are well illustrated and give a fair summary of present-day opinion. The papers on congenital dis-