BOOK REVIEWS


A new book on paediatrics has been produced by the University of Tennessee College of Medicine. Physically it is 8 in. by 5 in. and 2 in. thick, well produced and printed. It is edited and much of it written by James G. Hughes.

What is the purpose of this book and to whom is it directed? It appears to be a complete collection of paediatric lectures and is on the whole very readable and eminently practical. There is no doubt that James Hughes and his colleagues practise down-to-earth paediatrics. Any consultant paediatrician in this country would be a better man if he knew all that is in the book, and though he may disagree with certain parts it is felt that he would be more than happy for his junior staff to read it. And the junior staff, given half a chance, will do so.

One drawback to a short book is the danger of misunderstanding, and there are places where this might happen if the reader does not give due consideration to every word. Also in places there is a lack of differentiation between the common and the rare.

To some extent the standard is variable. The chapters on 'Psychologic Aspects' on 'Mental Retardation', 'Electrolyte Problems', 'History and Examination' and the 'Newborn Infant' are excellent. The chapters on the less common subjects such as 'Endocrine and Metabolic Disturbances' or 'Mesenchymal Diseases' seem better than ones on commoner subjects such as 'The Digestive System' or 'Respiratory System', where the process of condensation tends to give a distorted view. The chapter on 'Paediatric Surgery' gives a good impression of the problems as seen by the paediatrician.

The index is good, but of course this book is primarily meant to be read and not used for reference, and it is very readable. It is strongly recommended for junior staff and particularly excels in giving an understanding of basic ideas and principles.


The idea behind this book is an excellent one. It is to provide a practical guide for the doctor who works with newborn infants, which will enable him to recognize and deal with those congenital abnormalities that manifest themselves in the early weeks of life. The editor has collected a team of 11 experts: each of them has contributed from his own specialized fund of experience. The result is a well-presented, compact and readable book containing a remarkable amount of interesting information not readily available elsewhere. There is a bibliography at the end of each chapter.

The first chapter on 'Incidence and Aetiology' is written by Dr. C. O. Carter. It includes a very lucid exposition of genetic counselling, which follows a brief yet adequate account of the principles of genetic determination. An invaluable feature of the book is the extension of this information into the chapters which follow, where a brief paragraph on genetics follows the clinical description of those disorders where it is relevant.

Congenital abnormalities are described under the various systems of the body. Generally speaking each chapter covers the ground very adequately. The eyes and skin receive splendid and well-illustrated accounts that will delight the paediatrician. The central nervous system and cardiothoracic systems are also very well covered, and the brief but practical section on the nose and throat is useful. The gastro-intestinal system suffers from an account which is excellent as far as it goes, but it is too brief. Orthopaedic abnormalities and special syndromes suffer from the lack of illustrations.

The decision to restrict illustrations in order to keep down the price of the book is surely a mistake when treating a subject that cries out for the services of the clinical photographer. It is hoped that the next edition will incorporate a chapter on congenital abnormalities of metabolism. Many of these are referred to in the text, but rarely is the account such as would enable them to be recognized.

This is a very useful book which should prove popular amongst paediatricians, obstetricians and general practitioners.


This book grew out of a postgraduate course at the University of California Medical Center in San Francisco. The reports, in book form, of symposia, conferences and courses are by no means always successful. The spoken and the written word are not identical ways of communication. There may also be considerable delay between the time of the meeting and the publication of