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 paediatric physician.

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 'Incidens 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 observed, and the brief but practical section on the nose, 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 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 this 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
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the book. Ready speakers may in the interval become unwilling authors. The scope of the papers, the selection of the authors and the nature of the contributions might probably have been quite different if the book had been planned as a series of monographs.

Although the editor of the present work has recognized these difficulties, and no doubt done his best to overcome them, they are apparent to some extent. The seven sections and 36 papers, written by 35 authors, deal with the pituitary, the thyroid, the parathyroids, the adrenals, the testes and the ovaries. There is much of interest in the book and the paediatrician who wants to discover what are the modern methods in the investigation of endocrine disorders that occur but rarely in his field, such as Cushings’s syndrome or Addison’s disease, will find much here that is helpful to him. But there is no indication of the changes in methods that are required when the investigations are to be applied in children. For example, the volume of water to be used in the water-load test for hydrocortisone deficiency is stated to be 1,500 ml., tout court.

There are four papers occupied with disorders presenting predominantly in childhood. One is concerned with calcium and phosphorus and the other with carbohydrate disorders. The space that is allotted to these subjects is small and the paediatrician will find them more fully dealt with in modern texts of paediatrics. Grumbach writes two good articles. One on abnormalities of sex differentiation and the other on sex chromatin, sex chromosomes and abnormalities. In the second paper he has an interesting theoretical discussion of the functions of the X chromosomes in the female. The one which is genetically active is isopyknotic (non-chromatin staining) and undergoes replication of DNA earlier; the second is heteropyknotic (chromatin staining) and undergoes replication later and the action of the genes on this chromosome is suppressed or inactivated. This difference in the two X chromosomes does not, he suggests, depend on their derivation, whether from mother or father, but is randomly fixed at an early stage of embryological development.

Our knowledge of human chromosomes has not yet reached drosophilic levels but we have come an astonishing distance in six years.


This small book forms a record of the International Study Group held at Oxford in 1962. The papers presented at the Conference by neurologists, paediatricians, psychiatrists and psychologists form the major part of the book, but reports of the group discussions are included and make a valuable section.

The term ‘minimal cerebral damage’ has been much used recently to group certain disorders of cerebral function in children, and it appears in the title of many papers here. However, the conference decided that the concept of minimal brain damage should be discarded. The majority were against these cases being put into one category, but were in favour of their separation from the general school population. These children require detailed study and diagnosis, and a large amount of research needs to be done in investigating the group. Some of the papers show how this is being attempted.

All workers who have to deal with behaviour problems and learning difficulties in children will find much food for thought in these pages. In addition they will get useful practical advice on, for example, the importance of recognizing minimal cerebral dysfunction in paediatric practice, the recognition of minor cerebral palsy syndromes, and the extent to which the child with ‘minimal brain damage’ should be investigated.

This handbook can be recommended as an up-to-date collection of information from several specialties about an important group of handicapped children.


This book is described in a preface as the first in France devoted to paediatric cardiology. It is intended for clinicians, and attempts to analyse cardiological problems from the point of view of the practitioner to whom the facilities of a cardiac unit are available.

The first chapters consist of a description of the modern methods of observing and recording the action of the heart. These chapters are set out with brevity and clarity, and are illustrated by good figures and tables. The radiographs in general, and the section on catheterization and angiography in particular, are admirable.

There follows a detailed section dealing with congenital heart conditions, and here again the subject matter is set out clearly, taking one lesion at a time, but pointing out the complications that may arise in interpreting results when more than one lesion is present. No attempt is made to deal with surgical treatment.

The chapter on rheumatic carditis is equally good, though it may be questioned whether the incidence in France is comparable to that in England in the past decade. This section is followed by consideration of arrhythmias and of heart conditions associated with the less common diseases. The general standard is high and is maintained throughout.

A few criticisms can be raised. It comes as strange to us that it is necessary to stress the inadequacy of auscultation by direct application of the ear to the chest wall, and to emphasize the necessity for a good stethoscope. In a modern book by countrymen of Laennec, this has a curious sound. Relating the position of the apex beat to the nipple, seems equally old fashioned. And to say that nothing was known of the aetiology of rheumatic carditis until 20 years ago scarcely does justice to British and American workers of the 1930’s and earlier. Reference to heart lesions by initials, without