
That there have been four editions of Professor Ellis’s book in 12 years confirms its well-established popularity and its position as one of the standard textbooks on paediatrics. Since the last edition was published in 1960, the changes made in the present edition are not extensive. The thalidomide story is included in the ‘man made’ congenital deformities, though thalidomide is not to be found in the index. The chapter on the inborn errors of metabolism has been expanded to include an account of the more recently recognized conditions.

It is a pleasure to re-read this book with its economy of words and clarity of expression. There are comprehensive references given to assist further reading. The management and treatment of conditions has been kept well up to date, though in reviewing a book it is always possible to suggest additions and alterations. The value of ‘colistin’ in Pyocyanea and Esch. coli infections in infancy is now sufficiently established to merit inclusion, as is the use of ethosuximide in difficult cases of petit mal. There seems good reason now to omit completely intrastragal oxygen treatment in the resuscitation of the newborn in favour of postnatal oxygen, when laryngeal intubation or more drastic measures are not indicated. Many would like to see advised an indwelling gastric catheter for aspiration in the management of the early stages of diabetic coma.

With so much attention focused on accidental poisoning in infants and young children, the possibility of including a more detailed treatment of the common poisons such as aspirin, barbiturates, ferrous sulphate seems well worthy of consideration. There is an excellent reference given for poisons but in an emergency, this may not be immediately available.

It is a well-produced book with an uncrowded layout, easy to read and with a particularly high standard of reproduction of photographs, diagrams and X-ray pictures. This new edition of Disease in Infancy and Childhood will certainly hold its position as one of the best single volume books on paediatrics.


The new technique of intestinal biopsy has spread to many countries in the past few years, and is probably now making its maximum contribution to the study of malabsorptive states. With characteristic promptitude the CIBA Foundation assembled the pioneers of the technique in Madrid, and the present small volume, well illustrated and commendably cheap, brings together most of the current thought in this field.

Discussions on the low-power appearance of the whole biopsy specimen are introduced by Booth from London, MacDonald from Seattle, and Baker from Vellore. While there was agreement that villous atrophy was usual in the upper jejunum in idiopathic steatorrhoea, the meaning of a change from the normal finger-like villi to leaf-like villi was the subject of considerable debate. This was made more pointed by the report from Vellore that not only sprue patients but also normal subjects showed leaf-like villi, though foetuses did not. Thus, while leaf-like villi might be acquired, possibly as the result of some unknown insult, they seemed not to affect the intestinal function, and sprue had to be regarded as due to a lesion at a subcellular or biochemical level. On the other hand the extensive sampling of the intestinal mucosa that has been practised at Seattle has revealed the very close interdependence, in coeliac disease, of villous change and gluten-induced damage. On a gluten-free diet the more distal part of the small bowel heals first and eventually completely, while the proximal part has not yet been shown to achieve complete normality.

The electron microscopic appearances of the mucosal cells and their microvilli in health and in steatorrhoea are described by Shiner, and the effects of gluten and its fractionation products by Frazer. Those practising or making use of intestinal biopsy will value the lively discussions for which these Study Group reports are famous.


The Symposia organized by the Ciba Foundation are now too well known to need introduction. However stimulating to the participants such symposia may be, not everyone is convinced that a verbatim report of discussions to papers, which themselves might perhaps be best published in the usual journals, justifies the cost of printing and publishing. This volume, a record of a meeting held in 1961 on the pancreas, is in every way equal to the high standard of its predecessors. There are sections on the ultrastructure and histochemistry of the pancreas, the nature and physiological control of pancreatic secretions, the assessment of pancreatic function, and on the genetic and metabolic aspects of the abnormal pancreas, with several contributions under each heading.

Although the symposium included aspects of both normal and abnormal pancreatic function, in fact the major part deals with normal physiology and only a relatively small part with the abnormal pancreas. While the former is fundamental, it is perhaps of greater interest to the physiologist than to the clinician who will find the latter more immediately relevant. The paediatrician will be especially interested in the description of the hereditary form of pancreatitis, in which the average age of onset is 12 years, and in the article on the diagnostic value of the sweat test in cystic fibrosis, although this is mainly a review of published work. There is also a useful discussion of the standardization of pancreatic function tests, enzyme methods, and sweat tests.

Although this volume can be recommended to those