BOOK REVIEWS


This book is written about the diagnosis of the young deaf child, and from the start much stress is placed on the need for early referral of children with speech and hearing problems to centres with adequate diagnostic facilities. Information about the necessary equipment and staff is gathered together in a valuable appendix. The authors emphasize the necessity for the contribution of many different specialties in the work of these centres and consider that the centres should be under medical direction. Both these points coincide with what is increasingly the common practice in this country. It is of course implicit in the title of the book that the deaf child is regarded as a patient, an attitude for which Kerr Love pleaded in this country in the early part of this century.

Attention is drawn to the desirability of house staff serving in the centres so that they may receive training in the care of acoustically handicapped patients.

Excellent descriptions are given of various methods of audiometry in children but the book is marred by one all-important defect. A brief mention is made of how some workers have tested the hearing of infants, but no definite advice is given that would enable the reader to carry out these tests so as to arrive at an evaluation of the hearing of an infant referred to him for diagnosis. The authors comment disparagingly that tests in infants must rely on gross responses to uncalibrated sound and apparently think little of such tests because they do not give an accurate description of the hearing in terms of frequencies and intensities. They consider that these two factors must be known in order to reach final conclusions on the status of a child’s hearing and that this information is necessary before adequate treatment and rehabilitative procedures can be recommended and initiated. This attitude makes it out of the question to diagnose deafness really early, i.e. during the first year of life. Yet it is at this age that treatment must start if the young deaf child is to have the chance to learn at the same age and in a similar way to the normally hearing infant. Failure to use the vital early years is borne out in the case histories given, for while one child is first seen just under 2 years of age and two others at about 2\frac{1}{2}, the others are much older and in no case does a diagnosis appear to have been made under 3 years.

There are 23 pages describing the conditioning of the child to carry out a pure tone audiogram, yet the pure tone audiogram will not indicate the use a child will make of his hearing in the acquisition of speech. The authors stress the importance of evaluating the child as a whole, but nevertheless exact and scientific tests of hearing are considered more important than clinical observations and deductions. A further 15 pages describe psychogalvanic skin resistance testing and electroencephalographic audiometry. A full and clear account is given and anyone wishing to know why these tests are not of greater value will find the information here.

It is to be hoped that in a subsequent edition the authors will give equally clear accounts of the clinical methods that are of value in testing the hearing of young infants. Their book will then be an excellent diagnostic manual for workers with deaf children. Until then it is feared that the book may dissuade others from attempting the diagnosis of deafness at the vital time, i.e. in infancy, and may perpetuate the ill results of late diagnosis which the authors themselves deplore.


The purpose of Catzel’s ‘Paediatric Prescriber’ is to provide the practitioner in pocket form with a guide to drugs and dosage for infants and children, and in this respect the new second edition proves most useful.

It contains a wealth of information. The section on neonatal prescribing (Chapter 2) will prove an invaluable guide to many in their first clinical encounter with this age-group.

The author’s percentage method, based on surface area (Chapter 1) will prove valuable to many in calculating dosages. His plea for standardizing measures deserves support. The value of this little book is beyond dispute, though had the author selectively omitted some of the less popular preparations, some alternative names, and perhaps the section on milk and milk products, the publishers might have been able to use a print that would have been easier to read. This comment in no way detracts from the reviewer’s commendation of this edition, and the suggestion that every newly appointed resident to a paediatric post should invest at once in a copy of this prescriber.