
In his preface, Dr. John Walton writes: ‘In designing the present volume, therefore, it has been my aim and that of the other twenty-four contributors, each an acknowledged expert in the field, to give an up-to-date and comprehensive yet precise view of disorders of muscle from several stand-points. The book is aimed primarily at the clinician, whether he be a general physician, paediatrician or neurologist, or post-graduate student studying for a higher examination or any doctor wishing to expand his knowledge of this group of disorders.’ It must be said at once that the Editor has achieved exactly what he set out to do. The book is comprehensive in the sense that the anatomy, physiology, pathology, and diseases affecting muscle are all discussed by experts who have succeeded to a remarkable extent in covering recent advances in knowledge and in giving copious references. This reviewer found the chapters on the pathology of muscular disorders particularly rewarding. Pearse’s ‘Histochernical Aspects of Muscle Diseases’ and Pennington’s ‘Biochemical Aspects of Muscle Disease’ for example, are remarkable reviews that repay detailed study. The chapters on electrodiagnosis are also excellent for they not only discuss methods of electrodiagnosis but also indicate when and how electrodiagnosis can be helpful in the clinical setting. In comparison, some of the chapters on clinical problems in muscle disease in the third part of the book seem to have rather little to say and that on ‘Myopathies in Animals’ hardly describes the clinical problems that are likely to be encountered frequently by those for whom the book was written. The chapter on polyneuropathies by Earl is rather sketchy; that on neuromuscular disorders of infancy by Tizzard inevitably contains little new; that by Kloepfer on genetic aspects of neuromuscular disease could have been expanded with advantage, for the large amount of information given in its 16 pages makes for rather heavy reading.

In general, however, there can be few criticisms of this excellent book which is beautifully printed and illustrated. It will be found useful by anybody interested in muscular disorders.


This Swiss paperback contains 5 essays on childhood neoplasms, 2 in French and 3 in German. It will be useful to the paediatrician and the general pathologist but is too elementary for the paediatric pathologist and the paediatric surgeon.

In the first chapter the late Dr. Bodian gives a clear account of the classification, incidence, treatment, and survival rates of 1,162 neoplasms (excluding leukemias) seen at Great Ormond Street. It is interesting to note that the percentage of deaths from neoplasia during childhood rose from 10% in 1949 to 20·3% in 1961.

Schweisguth’s account to some extent overlaps that of Bodian, though the approach is somewhat more clinical. There are some strange contradictions: in London, Wilms tumour not infrequently calcifies, yet practically never does so in Villejuif. Actinomycin D is useless at Great Ormond Street, but an excellent adjuvant in Berne and Boston. In London, no children with osteosarcoma survive, but 5 to 19% do so in Berne.

There follows an outline of the role of surgery, either alone or in combination with other methods of attack. Most of the quoted results relate to American work.

Wagner and Kaser deal with the effect of chemotherapy on all types of childhood malignancies. This is the best section in the book. The team approach (surgeon, radiotherapist, chemotherapist, and histologist) is rightly stressed. Though it is encouraging that in 60% of cases chemotherapy is beneficial, the list of side-effects makes grim reading.

The last chapter deals very briefly with the excretion of catecholamines in neuroblastoma and phaeochromocytoma.

Three criticisms: there is too much overlap and the editor should try some radical surgery; only two of the five chapters have a bibliography; a ‘recent-advances-type’ of book is presumably meant for reference, yet this 35s. paperback showed signs of falling apart even after one reading.

Donald Paterson Prize Essay

A prize essay competition will be held, open to medical practitioners registered in the United Kingdom for not more than ten years. The value of the prize will be twenty-five pounds.

The subject of the essay shall be related to paediatrics but will be chosen individually by candidates. The essay shall consist substantially of unpublished work.

Entry forms and further information may be obtained from the Secretary, British Paediatric Association, Institute of Child Health, Great Ormond Street, London W.C.1. The closing date for applications will be June 30, 1965.