Book Reviews


All branches of child health are concisely covered in this 5th edition at a level that is directed primarily at the undergraduate and non-specialist.

In the main the book fulfils its purpose adequately, but its presentation lacks vitality, and for the uninitiated there is a failure to discriminate between the important and the rare.

The chapter on congenital abnormalities, with the exception cited below, is excellent, and the book is illustrated by some commendable photographs, and the list of references at the end of each chapter is a useful feature. There are a number of deficiencies in the content: particularly striking in this respect is the treatment of strawberry naeves by radiotherapy without reference to the natural history of this, the most common of congenital abnormalities. It is also disappointing to see that the cleansing of babies’ nostrils with cotton wool and the use of laxatives and enemas as part of the routine treatment of acute tonsillitis are still recommended. The theory advanced for the cause of hyaline membrane disease is no longer acceptable, and it seems appropriate to mention surfactant in a 1965 edition.

Perhaps a completely up-to-date and satisfactory textbook on paediatrics, even for the undergraduate, would be more readily achieved by a larger group of contributors. When considering the next edition of this book the authors might well take their example from an outstanding Scottish textbook, Davidson’s Principles and Practice of Medicine.


Hsia has wisely divided the 2nd edition of his book into two separate volumes; Part 2, Laboratory Methods, is to appear shortly.

The first 25 pages are devoted to a succinct account of the background of medical genetics, and include a lucid explanation of the Watson-Crick model for DNA and of the way in which the concept of messenger RNA can provide a plausible mechanism for the replication of genetic information.

There are brief sections on genetic history-taking and counselling, leaving some 340 pages for the consideration of over one hundred diseases. These are divided into biochemical variations in normal human beings; the haemoglobinopathies; serum protein deficiencies; enzyme defects (56 of these can now be mustered); disturbances in transport mechanisms; disturbances in lipid metabolism; the porphyrias; hereditary myopathies; and miscellaneous disturbances (gout, oxaluria, haemochromatosis, diabetes insipidus, diabetes mellitus)

The author, having decided to encompass so large a number of diseases, has been faced with the problem of how to handle subjects such as the treatment of fibrocystic disease and the obscure genetics of diabetes mellitus, subjects really requiring extended discussion which would have been out of character with the book as a whole. Indeed, so numerous and varied are the disorders that can be classified as inborn errors of metabolism, that the task of dealing with all of them in a single book is becoming almost equivalent to attempting to write a small book covering, for example, ‘diseases due to infection’. In a good many instances, therefore, the amount of information supplied here is hardly more than is to be found in one of the larger textbooks of paediatrics, so that there is no attempt to compete with the monumental (and far costlier) book on the same subject by Stanbury, Wyngaarden, and Fredrickson.

In spite of these limitations, this book does contain a surprising amount of up-to-date information which is presented with great skill and clarity, and it thus provides not only a convenient source to which the clinician can go for the main facts of each disorder, but also the key references for further information.


During the past 10 years two large and a number of smaller textbooks on paediatric surgery have been published in Germany, and one may wonder whether a further paediatric surgical book is really necessary. The fact that this book was written in East Germany gives it special interest. East German surgeons have to work in