
Diagnostic procedures become progressively more sophisticated and complex, and the older clinician increasingly more removed from the heart of things, and is almost reduced to reading the conclusions of reports without fully understanding the substance. Cytogenetics, the working of the cell, the genetic code, the details of all these are increasingly difficult to follow and not made easier by the growth of specialist jargon.

Dr. Valentine, a clinical paediatrician, addresses this valuable little book to his colleagues and calls it a story book; and he writes, indeed, in a simple, gay language which helps to clarify a lot of the mysteries of cytogenetics. Of necessity he has practised meiosis and gallocs gaily through the cell, its chromosomes, the happenings of cell division, and the abnormalities that stem from faulty division, all in 28 pages. He then slips in an invaluable chapter on dermal ridge patterns and dermatoglyphics, before spending, in chapter 5, over a quarter of the whole book on mongolism. This is an excellent arrangement. Every paediatrician knows mongolism backwards and so the author can concentrate all the aberrations of chromosomes and fingerprints in illustration of the whole cytogenetic story. In this chapter there is perhaps just one important point over which at least some of his colleagues may disagree. Dr. Valentine appears to say that he would tell her immediately when ‘faced with a mother with a newborn mongol baby’. He also recommends that when a mongol is born to a woman below 35 years chromosome studies are mandatory: the matter is, he says, too important. Perhaps he is right, though it may not always be possible.

Ten pages go to trisomies D (13-15) and E (16-18) and to ‘cat cry’. The remaining 30 pages are given over to aberrations of the sex chromosomes. Here the author becomes particularly happy, and amongst other things points out the overriding importance of the Y chromosome, the timely intervention of which decide the gonads to develop into testes, which, in the nick of time, persuade the genitalia to develop the masculine configuration by which phenotypical man is recognizable at a glance.

This little book will be a valuable help to all practising physicians and medical students. It has several useful diagrams, adequate photographs, and is well bound.


In this work is a catalogue of mostly simply genetically determined diseases, arranged alphabetically by preferred name. Conditions whose inheritance is certain and simple Mendelian are marked by an asterisk. The catalogue is exhaustive. No less than 837 conditions are listed as dominant or probably dominant, and 530 as recessive. Under each condition two or three key references are given.

This catalogue will be especially useful to those concerned with genetic counselling. It is seldom that one will find the condition about which inquiry is made not listed in McKusick provided that it is determined by a mutant gene; though those concerned will often need to read some of the references listed before giving advice. Apparently similar clinical conditions may have more than one type of genetic determination.

The catalogue is printed by computer, which no doubt makes it easy to keep it up to date. The appearance is, therefore, somewhat unusual; the print is in capitals throughout, asterisks replace colons and semicolons. This, however, makes no real difficulty.


The series of review articles published under this title in the British Medical Journal during 1966 has now been collected into a single volume. The titles were planned to cover the growth and development of children as well as the diseases of childhood, and contributors include experts in the various disciplines of medicine as well as many eminent paediatricians. The chapters cover most of the practical problems which face general practitioners and cannot fail in their variety to cater for special interests. Because each chapter is sufficient in itself, the variation in style and approach is stimulating. The emphasis is always on the conditions most frequently seen in general and paediatric practice, but rarities and new developments are discussed in a manner to interest all doctors. The book should not be ignored by those working for higher qualifications. The paediatric clinic includes many common complaints, the proper handling of which is as important to a community as the more esoteric management of rare and more serious disorders. Examiners are not impressed by the candidate with no knowledge of everyday medicine.

Paediatricians will recognize the style and viewpoints of colleagues, but there is always benefit in reconsideration of an argument or from a quiet evaluation of one’s own techniques and practices. It is inevitable that there would be disputes between the experts in some matters of detail. It was surprising to find boric acid crystals recommended in two chapters for the treatment of ammonia dermatitis and that the homoeopathic dose of chloral hydrate traditionally advised by textbooks is again copied. Half the photographs could have been left out without serious loss to the text.


This monograph represents the present thoughts and policies of Professor Roaf after working for more than 20 years on the very complex deformity of scoliosis. It