
Diagnosticians 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 gallups daily 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 all these are almost reduced to reading the conclusions of reports and is sometimes backwards and so the author can concentrate on 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.


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
embraces a wide review of current thought and writings in the English speaking world, and in several European countries, together with a good bibliography.

The book is essentially one for the specialist surgeon dealing with this intractable problem, but it does present for other clinicians a good account of the ill effects of the spinal deformities on the thoracic and abdominal viscera. For all readers, it suffers from poor reproduction of x-ray films, important for a full understanding of the text. The numerous clear line diagrams are, by contrast, very helpful. If more than selected chapters are read, the repetition of points made previously can become tedious.

Much of the author's own work has consisted of studies of the forces that could cause deformities and of their effects on the spine, and these subjects are particularly well covered. Most standard methods of non-operative and operative treatment are discussed with particularly good descriptions of thoracic epiphysiodesis and lumbar spine wedge resection. It is for work on these two operations, in combination with other methods, that Professor Roaf is best known.

No attempt is made to give a statistical evaluation to the results of this work, as it is felt that the prognosis in any individual patient is insufficiently clear and the methods of measurement too liable to error for such an exercise to be of value. Indeed, it is for stating clearly how little is known of the aetiology of scoliosis and for asking so many questions, for which our present-day answers are so inadequate, that this monograph is chiefly useful. One hopes that in a few years Professor Roaf will be able to produce a second edition which will be able to give a more definite guide on aetiology, prevention, and treatment of scoliosis.


This volume comprises the 29 papers presented at the International Wenner-Gren Symposium on Comparative Leukaemia Research held at Stockholm in September 1965. The symposium covers three main aspects in leukaemia research, viral leukaemogenesis, immunology, and epidemiology.

Each main aspect is introduced with a paper of general interest. Stoker's introductory paper on cell interaction with oncogenic viruses is a good and valuable summary. Kaplan's account of viral leukaemogenesis in mammals reviews the work on this subject over the past four years. The distinction between vertically transmitted and exogenous murine leukaemia is becoming clearer, and as Kaplan says, this may possibly have parallels in man with important implications for active immunization for the exogenous type. There follow papers on viral aspects of human, bovine, and avian leukaemia. Sevoian's paper on avian lymphomatosis is especially worth reading.

The therapeutic implications of tumour immunology are obvious, and Hillemann reviews the experimental aspects of cancer control by immunological procedures in a long and detailed paper. Dutcher's account, 'Autoimmunity and Leukaemia' is also interesting, if somewhat speculative. The remaining third of the book is devoted to papers on epidemiology and leukaemia. Clemmesen describes epidemiological aspects of human leukaemia. However, Burkitt's tumour is given scanty coverage in this paper, and the paragraphs on chromosomal aberrations, ionizing radiation, and viruses are too sketchy to be suitable for this type of monograph. In other mammals epidemiology has provided much valuable evidence in favour of a viral aetiology in leukaemia, and an extensive paper by Marshal et al. covers most of the published work in this field since Engelbreth-Holm's famous monograph and stresses particularly the recent work on bovine leukaemia. A short discussion follows each paper.

This volume serves a useful purpose in bringing together topics of research in leukaemia from widely differing disciplines. However, the contents of this type of symposium are of necessity ephemeral and it hardly finds a place in a purely clinical paediatric library. None the less there is much in it of theoretical interest, and workers whose research is related to any aspect of leukaemia or tumour biology should find something new.


When the health and habits of developing countries are studied, Western specialists (from what we have cynically been called the 'overdeveloped' countries) 'regard those who fail to act in accord with their own practices as being ignorant and superstitious'. The author of this book discusses how and why people in developing countries react to health programmes and health services; and she suggests how the barriers of communication between them and scientifically trained health workers from other countries can be overcome, largely by using the tools of the social, anthropological, and behavioural sciences.

In Part I traditional systems of care in sickness are discussed, including the role of the traditional healer and his relationship with modern medical personnel. Part II describes social groups, cultural patterns, ritual, and religion in health practices. Part III brings together the ingredients; it shows how priorities for a health programme can be decided and the stages in its acceptance. It outlines the training of professional and auxiliary health personnel, and stresses the need for liaison between field and research work.

The author was Professor of Education in Tropical Areas (University of London), and this book is distilled from her first-hand knowledge of health problems in Africa, South-East Asia, and India.