Book Reviews


This book, based on a series of lectures given in the University of London in 1966, is 'an attempt to stimulate interest in the application of human cytogenetics to population studies'. In this Dr. Court Brown has been most successful and the work is a reflection of the valuable studies pioneered in his M.R.C. unit.

The first chapter contains an outline of the methods used, particularly the classification and analysis of metaphase cells and the recording of the results. The findings in a study of aneuploidy and ageing are presented together with the data on the frequency of chromatin and chromosome aberrations in individual cells of normal subjects. An assessment is also given of the frequency of persons with constitutional abnormalities. Chapter 2 deals with the identity of the chromatin positive male and, in the third chapter, the recent work on the YY syndrome, currently of interest to the sociologist and criminologist, is presented, with a discussion of the behaviour and genetics of the Y and its role in sex determination. The final chapter includes a description of the types of structural heterozygotes discovered in surveys and the identity of autosomes involved. The results of analyses of patients or workers subjected to various irradiations are especially mentioned.

The book is well produced, the photographs are of a particularly high standard, and the good bibliography will be useful to the specialist in this field. It is a very readable addition to the range of human cytogenetic publications and could be profitably studied by clinicians with some interest in chromosome work.


This work attempts to classify many of the commoner and some of the uncommon congenital anomalies in terms of anatomical and embryological defects. It reviews the borderline between the disordered anatomy found by the neonatal surgeon and pathologist, and the changes which may have occurred at the various stages of embryogenesis. It is divided into three main sections: first, abnormalities of the organization of midline structures resulting in lesions such as spina bifida, and secondly, abnormalities of morphogenesis of the embryonic plate, such as malformations of the ventral body wall, and abnormalities of limb bud development. The third section, which discusses the genesis and classification of double monsters, is probably the best account of this type of abnormality in the current literature.

The bibliography includes standard references to the English, American, and European literature, and there is a useful teratological glossary. The illustrations throughout are excellent, especially the line drawings. The text is written in French that can easily be understood by those who are not too familiar with the language.

Essentially, the writers have gone back to the morphological approach first described in France by Isidore Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire (1832). They claim that the main message of the book is to highlight the mechanism of morphological malformation, that is to say the genesis of the deviation of embryological development, which results in the final deformity.

It is not intended to be a work of depth, however, and is not all-embracing. For example, there is no mention of chromosomal anomalies.

Obviously quite a lot of care has been put into the design of the tables and the layout of the book in general, and it is a tribute to the three authors that after the completion of such a work the senior should refer to M. Haegel and M. Pagès as 'mes amis et mes assistants'.


A distinction is made between inherited endogenous defects and non-inherited exogenous diseases acquired by the embryo and fetus; it is the latter that are dealt with in this book. The work is based on lectures given to medical students over the past 9 years. Already the subject has become too big for the author to review the literature in its entirety, though he has studied some 4000 references, more than 1000 of which are quoted. In particular, consideration of the normal development of fetal physiology is brief.

The main pathological processes dealt with include: infection, which takes up more than a quarter of the book; disorders resulting from defects of nutrition and hypoxia; intoxications; maternal diabetes; fetal haemorrhage; and prematurity. The information gathered together will be of immense value to anyone interested in the well-being of the developing fetus, though an inadequate index and unhelpful lay-out of the text somewhat detract from the value of the book as a work of reference.

This book underlines the division of responsibility and