and especially for those with an interest either in the newborn or in neurology.

Dr. Beintema's book describes another Groningen study, designed to test the consistency and reliability of the findings in the neonatal neurological examination originally devised by Prechtl and Beintema. 49 full-term infants were each examined practically every day during the first 9 days of life. The results for each individual test in the examination are analysed for their variation with the day of life and their correlation with pre-, peri-, and postnatal factors. The value of the study is limited by the selection of the sample; few, if any, of the babies had what paediatricians would regard as serious neurological disorders. The non-neurological data on the postnatal period do not conform to the rigorous standards set by the remainder of the study. The contents of this book would probably have been more useful in a much briefer form. It will be of limited appeal; those directly concerned with neonatal neurology will need to study it, but they will find it hard work.


The fact that Dr. Jolly's book has achieved two editions and a reprint in the space of four years indicates its popularity. It is not difficult to see the reasons for this success, with a readership which must be largely composed of undergraduate students and recently qualified doctors. The style is concise and, on the whole, readable in spite of occasional lapses such as 'the poisonous effect of bilirubin on the basal ganglia'; the text is well set out, with numerous clear headings; and the illustrations are profuse and of excellent quality. The subject matter is divided into 29 chapters by system, with sections on certain general topics such as 'History Taking and Examination', 'General Care of the Child', 'Fluid Therapy', and a 'Paediatric Dosage Guide'. A bibliography of useful references is given at the end of each chapter.

It must be impossible to write a textbook for the inexperienced reader, which meets with the unqualified approval of the specialist reader or reviewer. The expert always believes he could have done it better especially if he has never made the attempt. Not everyone, for example, would have included so many rare syndromes while devoting only 16 pages to emotional and behavioural disorders. Others might take exception to some of the opinions expressed, such as, 'medical treatment (for pyloric stenosis) can be recommended only if no surgeon is available', or 'faecal incontinence is almost always the result of chronic constipation unless the child is mentally retarded'.

These would, however, be carping criticisms and ought not to weigh against the over-all virtues of this book. Dr. Jolly is a disciple of modern paediatrics and his book has a distinctly topical flavour, with its emphasis on parental attitudes and anxieties, on the genetic and social aspects of childhood disease, and on the problems of handicapped children. The importance of normal growth and development is properly stressed, and this section is illustrated by over 40 photographs of an exceptionally high standard. In fact, so much of this book is devoted to preventive medicine and the normal child that the only old-fashioned thing about it is its title.


The title is slightly misleading. The book would be better called 'Mechanisms of Disease in Children'; it is in fact an attempt to make the reader think about the more puzzling aspects of the pathology of children. There is no attempt to be comprehensive—this is a bedside rather than a reference book. It is therefore a little frustrating that any space at all is given to uncontroversial topics, thus minimizing space afforded to more interesting problems.

The book is easy to read, and beautifully printed, but the photomicrographs are, on the whole, poor, mainly as a result of the quality of the sections photographed. Most of them could be left out without detracting from the over-all value of the book. This might lead to a decrease in the price, which is high for such a book.

But criticisms fade; this is a rare book. The specialized pathology is presented, as far as possible, with reference to general pathological principles, and the value of this in everyday practice is incalculable. 'Special pathology' as taught today is of value only when a patient's disease falls immediately into a definite pigeon-hole. When diagnostic problems arise, only the general principles of pathology will be of help, and it is for this reason that this book can be warmly recommended to all paediatricians.


This monograph of 100 pages gives a personal viewpoint on sudden death in infancy (SUD), based on 244 infants examined at necropsy by the University Institute of Forensic Medicine in Copenhagen.

Geertinger considers that the children die as a result of chronic hypoparathyroidism due to a congenital defect in glandular development, probably induced by a latent rachitic state in mothers. This is substantiated by the histological finding of thymic tissue in close association with a diminished amount of parathyroid tissue in the capsule of the thyroid and a reduction in the serum calcium and citrate in his cases. He has found similar histological change in rats born to mothers who had been on a rachitic or calcium-eliminating diet.

He maintains that these children have usually been

This monograph on febrile convulsions is a detailed review of the world literature and the author’s personal experience. The first six chapters cover the incidence, clinical manifestations, investigation, treatment, and prognosis. The last chapter gives a comprehensive analysis of the experimental background, and the author suggests lines that future research might follow. There is also an extensive bibliography.

The detail is beyond the scope of the general paediatrician, particularly the chapter on electroencephalography, and the writing tends to be repetitive. However, there are concise summaries at the end of each chapter, and the whole book can be read in a few hours.

The clear histograms could prove useful for teaching purposes, for example those on pages 23 and 24 demonstrating age at the first febrile convulsion, and those in chapter 5 relating age to risk of recurrence, and occurrence of non-febrile convulsions.

An immense amount of work must have been involved in the production of this monograph, but it does not really add anything new to the understanding of febrile convulsions, and the etiology of one of the commonest clinical problems in paediatrics remains as much of a mystery as ever.


This book contains the proceedings of the Cardiff meeting of the Society for Research into Hydrocephalus and Spina Bifida 1966, and covers the usual fairly wide range of subjects which are brought together in the meetings of this Society. A number of the papers contain material already familiar to those interested in this subject, such as further data from Laurence on the spina bifida cases occurring in South Wales between 1956 and 1962, and a further follow-up of the untreated hydrocephalics which he reported with Coates some years ago. Both of these add important background data which must be taken into consideration when any survey of the treated patients with spina bifida and hydrocephalus is undertaken. The surveys from Birmingham and Liverpool are perhaps less valuable in this respect. The Sheffield group presents a further detailed analysis of the survival and paralysis in open myelomeningocele which has been grouped according to the time of repair of the lesion. There has clearly been considerable attention to the statistical methods in the production of the life tables for the various groups related to the time of treatment, but a careful analysis of the distribution of the site of the lesions within the groups, and the knowledge that the infants were not allocated to groups by random distribution, but by circumstances attending their referral, suggest that these groups may not be strictly comparable. However, the surprising thing is how close the survival of the groups treated conservatively or not treated at all comes to the survival of those treated by early operation. The analysis of leg movement used in this survey by Sharrard et al. shows some change from their earlier emphasis upon digital scoring of muscle groups, to a more general grading of the paralysis from mild to severe. This is in keeping with the neurological assessment of these lesions which are often primarily upper motor neurone in type, or a mixture of upper and lower motor neurone lesions, such that direct muscle group examination is not so relevant to future neurological function. This point is made in the short study by Brocklehurst, Gleave, and Lewin upon the ‘Early Closure of Myelomeningocele with Especial Reference to Leg Movement’; by recognizing that many, if not all, of the spina bifida lesions are in fact lesions of the spinal cord accompanied by both afferent and efferent innervation to myotomes at the level of the lesion and below, and therefore the muscle groups are functioning at a lower motor neurone level but are included in what may be either a spastic or a flaccid paralysis. In this brief study no significant improvement in the neurological function assessed in this way was found after early closure.

Some of the most interesting communications are contained in the latter half of this journal; the examination by Emery of the origin of the ultrasound waves in the normal and hydrocephalic infant brain shows clearly that there are interfaces other than the lateral ventricle walls which may give rise to misleading echoes and render this technique for the diagnosis of hydrocephalus somewhat unreliable. The radiological study of the central canal in myelomeningocele by Andersson et al. from the University of Göteborg in Sweden is particularly stimulating in relation to the embryological pathology of these conditions, and the small abstract from Grundy’s extensive work upon the circulation of the cerebrospinal fluid in the cat is of relevance to any understanding of the nature of hydrocephalus in spina bifida. Of particular interest to physiologists is the report of derangement of temperature control in hydrocephalus by Gubbay, which adds another form.