
This handsome book forms a most valuable addition to the limited standard literature on an increasingly complex topic. Written by a nicely-balanced team of authors—some already renowned in their special fields, others destined to become so—it has been produced in a remarkably short time and is, in consequence, refreshingly up to date. Each of the 68 chapters represents a personal appraisal of its subject, the evident individualism, combined with a high degree of accuracy and deft handling of controversial issues, being a tribute to the editorial and writing skills involved.

The editor himself has written 7 chapters and is co-author of another describing, with typical thoroughness and clarity, the clinical anatomy of the heart. By contrast, the token treatment of cardiac catheterization procedures is disappointing, though the caveat on the attendant hazards stands out and should be heeded. The author of the section on radiology of the heart endears herself by frank admission of the 'gamesmanship' involved in decisions on pulmonary vascularity. The section on electrocardiography cannot be counted a complete success in so far as it provides neither a clear and concise exposition of its complicated subject, nor readily available data of the kind so valuable for reference purposes.

The phonocardiography chapter happily debunks the widespread belief in absolute fixity of the second sound split in atrial septal defect, and ends with a timely reminder of the infrequency with which neonatal murmurs are indicative of heart disease. Embryology of the heart is intelligibly presented (need one say more?), and we learn with interest that the 'tricuspid' orifice has but two commissures. Fetal and neonatal haemodynamics are also well covered, though the ethical eyebrow quivers at mention of cardiac catheterization during the first day of extrauterine life.

The sections on specific heart diseases cover the whole range of congenital and childhood-acquired lesions, from glyogen storage disease to double outlet right ventricle, and from cardiovascular manifestations of collagen disorders to coronary sclerosis. All are most informative, though one may question whether a projecting jaw and arm-span merely in excess of height truly characterize Marfan's syndrome, and prefer the precision and lucidity of the chapter on atrial septal defect to the anecdotal style of the approach to the more difficult subject of its ventricular counterpart. Some will regret the omission of specific coverage of the Eisenmenger syndrome. Others may differ in their interpretation of electrocardiograms in the anomalous left coronary section. Many will nowadays disagree with the advice on prophylaxis against bacterial endocarditis. The purist will protest at the frequent unnecessary coupling of the term 'systolic' with 'ejection' in describing murmurs.

There is a very useful final chapter summing up the present position of paediatric cardiac surgery. Lists of drugs and doses in the chapters on dysrhythmias and heart failure go some way to compensate for the absence of a convenient appendix with such data. The bibliography is comprehensive throughout. Reproduction of the x-rays and photographs is generally of excellent quality, but some tables, graphs, line-drawings, and electrocardiograms are not perfectly distinct. The minor nature of these criticisms itself bears testimony to the true status of this major work.


This is clearly the best book of its kind so far produced. Though no less than 11 of its 73 authors have recently written also for its chief competitor, the over-all impression made by this work is quite different. This is especially true in respect of accuracy and completeness. One or two chapters, such as those on cardiac catheterization and atrial septal defect, may constitute exceptions in the latter regard, but selection of aspects to be excluded is never an easy or entirely satisfactory matter. For reference purposes there is no dearth of clearly-presented data on every likely topic and the bibliography is comprehensive throughout. The illustrations are in general clear and well reproduced though with some variation from this standard and the odd case of mislabelling.

The first part of the book is essentially a concise course in basic cardiology. The exceptionally thorough coverage can be gauged from commentary on the cardiac roentgenology section. This starts with a salutary and instructive account of x-ray generation, with special relevance to radiation safety measures, and continues via clear exposition of radiographic anatomy, fluoroscopic technique, and film interpretation to full discussion of cardio-angiographic practice (though the R.A.O. left heart illustration does not look quite right). Similar thoroughness characterizes nearly all the other sections...
in this part, and there is no need to say more than that it was a welcome surprise to find an introduction to the ways and place of the computer and such an intensely practical approach to genetic aspects.

The second part deals with the specific congenital cardiac defects and might have been still better if the authors had agreed to a more uniform system of presentation. The first-rate section on ventricular septal defect contains accidental misdefinition of the ejection fraction, and that on aortic stenosis errs in describing paradoxical splitting of the second heart sound. Of more importance is an apparent lack of balance in the aggressively surgical policies recommended in treatment of congenital aortic stenosis and anomalous left coronary artery; perhaps, however, the reader is intended to form his own judgement on these issues in the light of the results, also presented, of the currently available procedures.

Rheumatic heart disease is fully covered, and we learn that a second or subsequent attack of carditis cannot be diagnosed without a change in murmurs or development of a new 'significant' murmur. It is good to find recorded the fact that the hypotoneraemia of congestive failure improves as the failure is controlled, though redistribution mechanisms are not discussed, and to see the prognostic value of really low serum sodium levels acknowledged. In a later section the 'low-salt syndrome' is properly relegated to its true status. In the chapter on dysrhythmias a scheme of action is proposed for dealing with cardiac arrest; its priorities are hardly right today, with electrical defibrillation as the ninth step, listed after intravenous and intracardiac injections.

Perhaps the most serious deficiency of this excellent treatise is the potentially dangerous and repeated advice regarding prophylaxis against bacterial endocarditis. In neither the section on chronic rheumatic heart disease nor that specifically dealing with bacterial endocarditis is it stated that the child regularly taking penicillin to prevent recurrences of rheumatism needs another antibiotic, or combination of antibiotics, to cover his dental extraction, scaling, etc.

There is a useful appendix of drug doses, and respiratory and cardiac catheterization data (omitting the ventricular work calculation). The index is entirely adequate and well set out for reference use. The cover is serviceable and its design may appeal to some tastes.


This is a comprehensive review of all aspects of subdural effusions in infants, based on the authors' experience in 87 cases treated in the Faculté de Médecine de Nancy.

The subject, which has many puzzling features, and is not always easy to manage, is covered in a systematic, if at times repetitive, fashion. The authors place great emphasis on the importance of trauma in the aetiology in many of the so-called idiopathic haematomas and effusions, and in their own series of cases they were able, by careful investigation, to elicit a history of trauma in a large proportion of cases. They emphasize at length the 'battered baby' syndrome as a cause of subdural haemorrhage, and, in their series, 12·6% of cases were associated with this condition.

The authors attach considerable importance to retinal haemorrhages in the diagnosis of the condition, and point out that while they are common in traumatic cases and in idiopathic cases, they never occur in postmenigitic effusion, and they regard this as a point in favour of a traumatic origin for the 'idiopathic' examples of this condition. In the investigation of these patients, the authors stress the importance of radiology of the whole skeleton to detect the presence of multiple fractures characteristic of battered babies. Transillumination of the skull has also been given considerable emphasis. Other methods of investigation, such as echo-encephalography, which are likely to be of increasing value, but at which the authors admit having only limited personal experience, are dealt with briefly.

The pathogenesis of the condition is considered in the light of the various theories previously proposed. The authors believe the lesion to be truly subdural rather than intradural, and do not consider that the osmotic theory can explain the known facts. The failure of attempts to produce a chronic subdural haematoma in the experimental animal, and the fact that the chief osmotic component of subdural effusion is albumin, the presence of which in such quantities cannot be explained by degeneration of red blood cells, are points which they raise against the theory of Gross and Zollinger. Their argument that recurring collections of high protein fluid in the subdural space in children must imply some defect in the permeability of the capillaries of the lining membrane of the haematoma, in particular the outer membrane, certainly has considerable force.

Their recommendations for treatment are orthodox. The diagnosis should be made, and the treatment instituted, by subdural taps performed with strict aseptic precautions. The danger of damaging the underlying brain in the performance of this investigation is properly emphasized. They recommend removal of small quantities of subdural fluid at a time, and point out that one should not persist too long with repeated punctures before resorting to more radical measures, either drainage through a small subtemporal craniectomy or the use of a large flap. They are in favour of removal of both inner and outer membranes; and the former because it may restrain the expansion of the brain; and the latter because its capillary bed is the source of the leak of protein and fluid into the subdural space. The latter argument appears to have a good deal more cogency than the former. They mention, briefly only, drainage of the subdural space by low pressure valve or other technique. This is a method that seems to have real value in resistant cases, but the authors appear to have been satisfied with their results from craniotomy.