malformations, both common and rare, are included, but ano-rectal defects with associated urological disorders are omitted, as are vertebral defects in relation to the formation and function of the urinary tract. Embryology and descriptions of operations are included in some of the chapters, but many of the writers have referred the reader to other volumes of the encyclopedia for details.

This book will be welcomed by all urologists, paediatric and plastic surgeons, and gynaecologists.


This gigantic volume with 1739 pages of text and 76 of index, an editorial board of 13, with 163 contributors, and weighing and costing more than ten pounds, defies serious reviewing. Certainly it covers the biological and physiological mechanisms involved in paediatric symptomatology, pathology, and clinical investigations, competently and comprehensively, and indeed, many of the chapters are masterly expositions of their subject. Certainly also, much of the text can, only by stretching the use of words, be said to have immediate relevance to the title.

Briefly, Part I, a mere 95 pages, entitled 'Sciences Fundamental to the Understanding of Growth and Maturation', has 5 chapters; 'The Cell', with some beautiful electronmicroscopy pictures, 'Heredity', well dealt with in 10 all too brief pages, and 3 with the grandiose titles, 'Intelligence', 'The Biopsychology of Social Behaviour in Animals', and 'The Social Biology of Human Beings', each needing a volume of its own, polished off in 50 pages.

Part II, the real core of the book, occupying 1200 pages, is, with some inevitable overlapping, brilliant; though here and there the bombastic American wording almost defies translation into the English language.

And then Part III, 'The Total Child': indeed the whole of him, including a host of aspects relevant and irrelevant. 'Genetics' and 'Cytogenetics', both excellent, might well have been included in Part I, while the chapters on 'The Battered Baby Syndrome', 'Adoption', 'Paediatric Jurisprudence', 'Sex Education', and 'Athletics', might surely have been left to a straight paediatric textbook.

It seems a pity to have to cavil at such superabundance, but unavoidably the feeling is engendered that a less permissive Editorial Board, and a smaller group of more disciplined contributors would have given us a book of more manageable proportions. As it is, the seeker with strong arms, able to reach it down from his stoutest shelf, will, more often than not, be rewarded by finding in these pages what he wants to know.


This is a small paperback volume which contains the edited transcript of the proceedings of a conference held in Bethesda, Maryland in May 1967, under the auspices of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development and the National Heart Institute with the object of discussing the viral mechanisms of congenital malformations from the points of view of different disciplines.

There were 12 participants under the chairmanship of Dr. Kurt Benirschke, with 7 visitors, and as a result the meeting was informal. The topics discussed are arranged under 12 headings, each having a short introduction.

The subjects covered include the results to date in the Perinatal Research Study begun by the N.I.H. in 1959 (L. R. White), the immunological response of the fetus (A. M. Silverstein), the functions of the placenta (J. Dancias), and virus infections of it (K. Benirschke), and epidemiological approaches to aetiological problems (R. W. Miller).

There is a good deal of information hidden away in the conversational sections, perhaps more than in the short introductions, but it is difficult to find as there is no subject index. No doubt a verbatim record is valuable and can be stimulating, but it does not make for easy reading when presented in such a literal transcript, which would have been greatly improved if the editor could have discarded the conversational trivia.


There has been an enormous amount of talk and writing about the thymus, much of it oversimplified and partisan. Paediatricians have been rightly involved (not always wisely, as is instanced by the unhappy concept of status lymphaticus) because the thymus is large in early life, and looks important. The clear demonstration of a role in development of specific immunity mechanism has cleared the air, but extrapolations to clinical situations have been uncritical, and the relevance of the enormous differences in different species has not always been appreciated.

Therefore, even if it is yet another of many, this critical review, which stresses the evidence in favour of divergent views, without coming to ill-founded generalized conclusions, is welcome. It is a valuable, up-to-date source of references (many from 1967), sufficiently selective that the bibliography is not too big, without any serious omissions which I noted, even if a few selections on the edge of the field seem eccentric. The English style, though not perfectly idiomatic, is readable, and a remarkable achievement for one writing in a foreign language (there is no mention that this is a translation). Only the title seems odd—the book deals with the role of the thymus in immunity, and is by