Book Reviews


This is the 14th edition of the textbook of paediatrics, originally published in 1896 when it was edited by Emmett Holt, senior. It is virtually a new book, which has been edited by Henry Barnett, with 19 assistant editors and no less than 139 authors, almost all American; an impressive undertaking indeed. Inevitably it will be judged against Nelson's *Textbook of Pediatrics,* the excellence of which has hitherto made it the standard text throughout the English-speaking world for the past decade or more. The new 'Holt' is some 10% longer (and heavier) than 'Nelson', but is otherwise of comparable format. Its strong suit is the particularly high standard of the basic physiological or biochemical background to the various sections, undoubtedly a most valuable feature. Here and there a subject is treated in perhaps too theoretical a manner, and the section on the physiology of dehydration seems an example of this, so that the tiro, faced with a decision of how to treat a dehydrated baby, might well be paralysed rather than guided by the complexity of the advice provided.

Most of the subjects which your reviewer sampled proved to be excellently and, occasionally, brilliantly done. It was hard to find anything to criticize, but surprising to note in the long diabetes section only the barest mention of the interesting temporary remission phase, which quite commonly follows the initial stabilization of diabetes, while the well-described syndrome of transient neonatal diabetes is not mentioned at all.

The over-all impression is one of admiration for the paediatrics of a country capable of producing not one, but two such splendid textbooks.


Surgical and paediatric literature is more complete with the publication of *Neonatal Surgery.* This authoritative work from the Liverpool School will be welcomed by paediatricians and surgeons responsible for the diagnosis or treatment of infants in the first month of life. In writing this text the authors have succeeded in producing a standard reference for neonatal surgery as well as recording the unique experience of the Liverpool Regional Service since its inception in 1953.

This book is clearly written and is easy to read. It gives invaluable advice on the problems of the neonatal period and the care necessary for the newborn infant requiring operation. The presentation is clear, and throughout a remarkable degree of uniformity has been maintained, though the results section of the chapter on oesophageal atresia is omitted. It is liberally illustrated, and each chapter includes a list of references. This store of references—approaching 200—is valuable, but sometimes the number of references appears more important than their precise accuracy.

In discussing meconium plug syndrome the authors do not appear to include 5 infants, initially diagnosed as meconium plug syndrome but subsequently proved to be Hirschsprung's disease (p. 388). That 4 of these infants died is sufficient reason to stress the difficulties in diagnosis of these two conditions. One or two chapters tend to discuss the older infant, or therapy relevant to the older infant, e.g. dialysis, Wilms' tumour, but the text is commendably restricted to the particular problems of the neonate.

These minor criticisms apart, the authors are to be congratulated on this outstanding book which merits detailed reading by all concerned with newborn infants.


The latest edition of *Laboratory Manual of Pediatric Micro-biochemical Techniques* is substantially different from the previous one. The paper cover is preserved to emphasize the authors' intentions to provide a manual for laboratory use, but its previously large size and type have now been reduced to more convenient dimensions. This has allowed a large amount of new matter to be included, with little increase in the number of pages.

The authors' original intention was to provide from their own experience a compendium of micro- and ultramicro-methods, with full technical details. In this they have succeeded admirably. In the new edition, the aim has been more ambitious, and it is now beginning to be a textbook of chemical pathology. Thus the clinical and technical commentaries have been expanded, and useful sections on inborn errors of metabolism such as those involving amino acids, mucopolysaccharides, red cell enzymes, glycogen, and other carbohydrate diseases, as well as carbohydrate malabsorption have been included. Tests for endocrine function
are also a new feature. Many references to the original publications are appended in all sections.

It is perhaps inevitable that some deficiencies will be revealed. Few would agree that proven congenital lactase deficiency, at any rate in children, is more common than congenital sucrase deficiency, the diagnosis of which has, contrary to the authors' statement, been supported by enzyme assays on jejunal mucosal biopsies.

One might wonder whether some of the enzyme assays are not presented in too simple a fashion. It is doubtful, for example, whether many hospital laboratories would wish to embark upon the routine assay of the enzymes of glycogen metabolism. The method of determination of plasma iron and iron-binding capacity by atomic absorption spectrometry has been separated from their colorimetric estimation by 140 pages. It is surprising to learn that, for example, the serum $\gamma$-globulin of the premature infant at 12 months of age is higher than that of the corresponding full-term infant, and that in the newborn the mean plasma iron at birth is actually greater than the mean iron-binding capacity. For those wishing to find normal levels and levels in disease it would be useful to know whether the values quoted are the authors' or from the literature. A more complete index would be helpful, though the arrangement of the contents serves the purpose to some extent.

These do not detract from the great merits of this book which every paediatric chemical pathologist, and indeed all chemical pathologists should have in their laboratories.

The title of the second book is misleading since its contents are confined to clinical chemistry, mainly methods, and do not include other branches of clinical pathology. Furthermore, though some of the methods have been only recently introduced, many have been in routine use in hospital for many years.

This volume underlines the growing realization that micro- and ultramicro-methods of clinical chemistry, mainly developed under the stimulus of the requirements in infants and children, can usefully be employed for adult patients. This application has been facilitated by the Auto-Analyzer. They offer advantages but also one drawback—the collection of blood samples, which is a skilled operation and requires much technician time.

The first six chapters deal with methods of estimation of individual components in blood, inorganic, organic, or enzymes, with some commentary on their clinical significance. A useful list of references is given at the end of each chapter. They are those in use in the authors' laboratory, and very full practical details are given. It is surprising that the estimation of blood sugar is preferred to that of blood glucose, and that chloride to sweat sodium. Most of the remaining chapters describe tests of function and their significance; these are often brief and not very illuminating, e.g. that on disaccharide intolerance.

As a practical manual to be used in the laboratory, the book is expensive, presumably because it is very well printed on fine paper. Of the two, the first may be preferred.

**Book Reviews**


This slim volume of 42 pages should be studied by every child health specialist. The material for this report is drawn from extensive research studies which have been carried out in Scandinavia in recent years. A great deal of useful information is provided about the nature of the infant's cry which is, after all, one of the most important clinical signs for paediatricians.

This information has been obtained by precise spectrographic and auditory analysis, and full details of this are given in the text. Clinicians should be aware of the valuable information which can be obtained from this type of detailed scientific study, so that they will increasingly apply this approach to clinical work. The monograph is clearly produced and contains many excellent illustrations.

This publication is No. 29 in the series in Clinics in Developmental Medicine, and both authors and publishers of this volume are to be congratulated on this useful addition to an admirable series.


This monograph provides a remarkably comprehensive examination of the current status of the problem of urinary tract infection in childhood and its relevance to renal disease in later life.

The author reviews the literature on the incidence, aetiology, diagnosis, treatment, and prognosis of the disease, and relates it to her own extensive clinical experience using case histories to illustrate certain points. In particular she discusses the vexed problems of the role of vesico-ureteric reflux and the diagnosis of urinary tract infection in childhood emphasizing again the frequent silence of the disease process. She also makes some interesting observations on possible methods of prevention.

The number of figures quoted from the literature are almost overwhelming, and reveal the difficulties inherent in comparing results from different centres. There is an extensive bibliography, and also an author and subject index.

The book should be read not only by paediatricians, but also by general practitioners and adult physicians, in the hope that it will inspire more enthusiastic management and follow-up of these patients. This should lead to a better understanding of the natural history of the disease, the development of methods of prevention, and a reduction in the morbidity and mortality from chronic pyelonephritis.