handicapped children: ‘Anyone accustomed to schools for the deaf... will readily appreciate the point’ (p. 64). But the doctor taking up educational medicine is not so accustomed; nor is he familiar enough with the developmental and educational needs of handicapped children to evaluate Dr. James’s generalizations about special education that show bias in a controversial field. The summary fashion in which these needs are considered will offer him little enlightenment. We wholeheartedly agree that ‘developmental paediatrics is of great importance for the doctor dealing with school children’ (p. 115), but accordingly merits consideration in much greater depth. Thus, the indiscriminate statement that all behaviour problems are ‘invariably’ due to the way in which the child has been handled in the past, and that educational problems in older children are ‘invariably related to child management, or psychiatry’ (p. 131), apart from being untrue, provide no practical guidance to the school doctor in his day-to-day handling of children with behaviour and learning problems, by far the commonest he will meet in educational medicine.

At a time when the comprehensive assessment of handicapped children is increasingly acknowledged as being a matter for co-operation between disciplines, the omission of any reference to the organization of local authority services and the role of other professional workers is particularly unfortunate. The short list at the end of each chapter of publications for further reading must still be regarded as minimum essential reading for the doctor entering the school health service.

This idiosyncratic account of autism is lively, interesting, and very readable but entirely personal. It gains its importance from O’Gorman’s extensive clinical experience of the condition, but readers should be aware that the book ignores the considerable clinical and experimental research done since the first edition and gives scant attention to the earlier work. The author also has the remarkable achievement of writing for 163 pages on autism without once referring to any of Kanner’s papers or even noting his epoch-making first account of the condition in 1943.

Minski and Shepperd’s account of non-communicating children consists of an analysis of 474 children seen since 1953 at the Belmont unit, one of the very few in-patient centres for the investigation of these children. The description of the various conditions associated with failure of language development is of interest, and it brings out the complexity of the clinical problems. However, its value is limited by the failure to obtain follow-up information on so many of the cases. Practical accounts of psychological and auditory assessment are given by Dr. Bowley and Miss Taylor, and Dr. Evans provides a brief account of some of the unit’s research. The didactic style of the book at times conceals controversy, but it contains some useful thoughts on the problems of non-communicating children.


The increase in length in the second edition of O’Gorman’s book on autism is largely due to the addition of three further case histories and to an expansion of the section on treatment. Psychotherapy and making a relationship are dealt with more extensively, and sections on conditioning procedures, habit training and group activities have been added. Zazlow’s ‘rage reduction’ treatment is described as often beneficial (the papers on this method given in the text are omitted from the references). In spite of the systematic studies of Kolvin and others, O’Gorman continues to assert on the basis of one case that autistic children frequently have a family history of schizophrenia, and despite well-publicized reports to the contrary he claims again that identical twins are always concordant for autism. Inexplicably, the twins called Barbara and Jennifer in the first edition have now been renamed Beryl and Gillian.

This issue contains some short specialist reviews, designed primarily for physicians, on the trials, triumphs, and tribulations which have followed the introduction of new drugs. Paediatricians will be interested in the age-related mortality rates over the past 50 years, especially for rheumatic fever and diabetes in children. And there is a succinct account of the recent rapid rise in deaths from asthma, and the fall which has followed recognition of the danger of excessive use of drugs such as isoprenaline in pressurized aerosols.

There is also a serious omission. In all the precise and often ponderous descriptions of drug testing and clinical trials, there is no reference to the hazards of new drugs to the young child. In this country a manufacturer is required to test a drug only for teratogenic and toxic activities on adult animals. The special physiological and metabolic problems of late fetal and neonatal life are ignored. An antibiotic can be released for use in patients of all ages, with no tests for toxicity in young animals and no clinical trial in young patients. This is unwise as experience with one antibiotic has already shown. There is ample evidence that drugs are metabolized in different ways at different ages. Paediatricians should be especially wary of new drugs or drug combinations.