Book Reviews


This is the 5th edition of Ellis’s Child Health and Development, appearing now under new editorship with a more comprehensive title. From the first this book was designed to complement textbooks on disease in infancy and childhood. This edition has the same general plan as its predecessors, but revision of the text has been thorough, new authors have been introduced, and much of it is quite new.

The first half, on child development, has a list of authors which promises a high standard and on the whole the promise is fulfilled. The first chapter is a clear summary of the genetic and chromosomal mechanisms of disease. The chapters on prenatals development by Donald, the newborn by Farquhar, and low birthweight by Drillien are masterly accounts of present knowledge in these fields, with adequate references for further reading. Tanner, on postnatal growth, and on puberty and adolescence, brings together in condensed but readable form the wealth of information from his and other sources hitherto dispersed in many publications. To the reviewer, with little knowledge of child psychology, the Maxwells’ contribution on intellectual development has much that is refreshingly new, and there is an admirable discussion on intelligence testing. Stone’s commonsense account of emotional development, Ingram’s well-illustrated and straightforward chapter on the development of behaviour, Cruickshank’s discussion of protection against infections, and the editor’s sensible account of nutrition and feeding complete Part I.

The second half deals with Child Care and Social Paediatrics. After two chapters on the historical and modern attitudes to children by society and by different social classes, it gives adequate factual accounts of the health and social provisions, statutory and otherwise, which exist for children today. Detailed and perhaps overlong, they contrast with the all-too-brief chapters on the aims and problems of education, vocational guidance, mental health and society, and the reproductive years. Health education is ably dealt with at greater length. Finally there are two excellent contributions: Children in Trouble, by Younghusband, and Child Health in the Tropics by Farquhar.

By today’s standards this book is good value for money. It is perhaps less important today than it was in 1947, when the first edition was published, to give a full account of the normal child. The pioneering work of Ellis and others has resulted in the inclusion of such accounts in most paediatric standard texts. But nowhere is it better done than here and Part I could easily stand on its own. The social aspects of child health are less easy to find elsewhere and therefore need less justification. Indeed the second part is required for all hospital and community paediatricians in training.


Dr. Mavis Gunther is the doyen of infant feeding experts in this country. We should perhaps be grateful that as a young doctor and mother she found ‘inconsistencies in the explanations and instructions given to her about infant feeding’, for it probably led to her main interests and research work being directed to this subject for the next 30 years. This essentially practical book from her unrivalled experience of day-to-day care of mothers and babies is intended primarily for mothers, though she writes as well for midwives, nurses, and doctors involved in advising them.

The book deals first with the choice of feeding method, and the counsel is wise and factual. The following chapters on breast feeding describe preparation in the antenatal period, techniques in the first days, the physiology of lactation, and prevention and treatment of possible complications of lactation in the mother. Sympathetic common sense prevails and these chapters are full of invaluable advice. Those on artificial feeding are no less informative, and the essential differences between cow’s and human milk are given. There are lessons to be drawn from her fascinating glimpses of other cultures, and of other mammalian feeding habits.

Has Dr. Gunther achieved her goal of making life easier for mothers, babies, and their attendants? In writing for a wide audience she will inevitably fail to please some. Not all mothers will understand what she says, while some doctors will find the lack of documentation a disadvantage. An unusually articulate mother tells us in the preface that this field is intolerably dominated by fashion! Very true, yet this is not a fashionable book and there is a wealth of helpful material here for all of us if we care to seek it out. Dr. Gunther’s self-effacing medical audience will hope, however, that she will continue working hard, and give them, in a few years’ time, the scientific, critical, documented review on this subject which no one is more fitted to write than she.


This book is the seventh of an annual series which appears to be sponsored by a pharmaceutical company and edited by one of its personnel. It contains review articles which are submitted to appropriate consultants for criticism before publication. The first chapter,