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 prenatal 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 those 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 selfish 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,
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entitled ‘Immunologic Deficiency States’, was reviewed by Dr. Robert A. Good and it is predictably lucid, authoritative, and up to date. A very useful appendix classifies the clinical and laboratory findings in 11 distinct syndromes of primary immunological deficiency. Other chapters discuss paediatric gynaecology, pharmacology, and surgery. The survey of paediatric gynaecological disorders ranges from the problems of neonates to those of adolescents, and is written for the practising American paediatrician. It gives a useful introduction to the diagnosis and management of intersex, but is not sufficiently detailed to be used as a reference text. Other disorders, such as amenorrhoea in adolescents, would be more likely to find their way to a gynaecologist on this side of the Atlantic.

The pharmacology section is particularly concerned with perinatal effects of drugs and gives useful information of placental transfer as well as an appendix detailing the serum half-life of various antibiotics in premature and term newborn infants.

There is a good review of recent advances in paediatric surgery, which includes a brief account of some neonatal emergencies. A chapter devoted to sex education takes a commonsense attitude but is probably more appropriate for British general practitioners and school medical officers than for paediatricians.

The 60-page Miscellany starts with a section on emergencies which again is of limited application outside America. The remainder of this chapter discusses, inter alia, the discovery of the Epstein-Barr virus and its relation to infectious mononucleosis and Burkitt’s lymphoma, the value of phototherapy in neonatal jaundice, the hazards of excessive noise, and the antenatal detection of genetic defects.

Standards of production and particularly the photographic illustrations are surprisingly poor when one considers the lavishness of much of the direct promotional material emanating from drug manufacturers. At £4, the book does not stand comparison with, for example, the Pediatric Clinics of North America or the Year Book of Pediatrics. Apart from the splendid immunology article, its main value is as a bedside book for occasional sampling.


A good case can be made for a book on disorders of adolescence. It would be of particular interest to paediatricians because they are concerned with growth and development and these are having their last fling in adolescence. Such a book should, however, focus on all parameters and their important peculiarities in this age period. Dr. Daniel’s book can hardly claim to do this.

It is divided into four sections: the essence of adolescence; problems of the adolescent patient; communication and rehabilitation; and the parents of the adolescent. The book is avowedly limited in its social scope, but in the third, mainly clinical section, it is particularly deficient both in what is included and what is omitted.

Why, in a book on adolescence, is so much space given to genetic disorders or to skin disorders, which are by no means predominant in adolescence? According to the index, nervous disorders appear on pp. 143–153, but on these pages is found a chapter on headache and convulsive disorders. And when one looks for nervous psychosomatic and adaptive disturbances, which are so important in adolescence, one finds disappointingly little on them. I can find no discussion of anorexia nervosa, appetite aberrations, or sleep disturbances. Amid some rather turgid generalizations and many irrelevances some pearls can be found, like ‘the desire for loudness’. The task of attempting to draw attention to this difficult and neglected cross-section of medicine is praiseworthy, but adolescence deserves a more comprehensive approach than can be found here.


This book deals with the effects of manipulation of the developing animal during ‘critical periods’. The use of this term is not confined to the embryological concept, as evolved by Stockard, but is extended to involve different critical events in different fields, e.g. weaning and social development, puberty and growth, etc. Many different parameters are studied, socialization of wolves, hypertensive response to salt and nephrectomy in rats of different ages, LDH response to stress, effects of sex hormones at birth on subsequent growth, the effects of irradiation of the ovary in early life on ultimate reproductive ability, adaptation to calorific loss, and systems of growth study by bone age. The papers are generally of high standard and a useful discussion is printed after most, unfortunately not all, of them. The paper by Rakusan and Poupa, dealing with morphologically defined critical periods of the cardiac response to aortic constriction is of particular value since other publications by these authors are not readily available to those reading English. Only one paper, by Grollman, deals with the effects of prenatal influences on the expression of phenotypic defects, a point emphasized by McCance in the general discussion following all the papers.

The value of conference proceedings published 3 years after the meeting is doubtful. In only two papers has some attempt been made to update the bibliography beyond 1967. This, together with its high price, will severely limit the value of the volume to most individuals.


The third International Conference on Congenital Malformations was held in the Hague in September