Book Reviews


This, the fourth edition, consists of 15 chapters, all but one written by a single author, to review subjects of current importance to paediatricians. Six chapters deal with the newborn and seven chapters are broad-based dealing with subjects such as respiratory function, endocrine function, immunological disorders, and genetics. Each chapter consists of a well-illustrated text with good references, relatively few of which are as recent as 1970. Most illustrations and diagrams used are good but there are exceptions. The reference system is reliable and clear, and the index adequate but not generous. The first four chapters dealing with fetal and neonatal respiration, fetal growth, asphyxia neonatorum, and respiratory distress syndrome are pedestrian. Overemphasis on animal experiments has unfortunately dominated neonatal topics for many years and is much in evidence in the first chapter. The otherwise good chapter on fetal growth does not include a discussion on the value or use of ultrasonic techniques which is now routine and no longer a research method in up-to-date hospitals in Britain. Curiously, a reference to ultrasonic measurement of growth is in the chapter on haemolytic disease of the newborn. The chapter on asphyxia neonatorum contains uninspired orthodox dogma including the tired and very unconvincing story of burned rabbits being better than controlled trials of asphyxiated neonates when assessing the value of hyperbaric oxygen. One suspects the author has never seen an asphyxia neonatorum treated by this useful modern technique and understates the hazards of intubation and positive pressure ventilation in other than the most expert hands.

The chapter on care of the infant in an incubator is a very wise inclusion with practical and useful advice. The chapter on haemolytic disease of the newborn is very comprehensive and well worth reading. The chapters dealing with genetics, immunology, and assessment of endocrine function, and on respiratory function, are highly competent and will give valuable information to all but the most highly informed.

The chapter dealing with diabetes mellitus is in two sections: the first, general problems, and the second, ocular complications. One would like to have seen more extensive discussion of the significance and possible manipulation of cholesterol metabolism in these children with a view to improving the long-term prognosis. If vascular disaster is to be avoided in these children it must be positively prevented.

The chapter on the nephrotic syndrome is competently written but with a strong histological bias which makes it mostly of interest to those with a primary interest in histology rather than in the clinical aspects of the disease. Sections of this book will be of interest to all consultant paediatricians who can confidently be advised to purchase it. It is too advanced for undergraduate students or for those studying for the D.C.H. or for general practitioners. The postgraduate studying for a M.R.C.P. in paediatrics must study this book carefully. The editors and publishers are to be congratulated on the general appearance and lay-out of the book but one would hope that the fifth edition will have less emphasis on neonatology.


The publication of 'Pädiatrische Neurochirurgie' in 1967 provided an encyclopaedic survey of the steadily enlarging field of neurosurgery in infancy and childhood. Dr. Koos has greatly expanded the section on intracranial tumours from 137 pages to over 400, with the help of Dr. Meredith Miller of Washington D.C. The new publication has the great advantage for some of us of being written in English instead of in German. Though the authors state in their preface that they 'have no intention of writing a textbook', they have dealt in detail with all important aspects of their large subject—statistics, pathology, clinical presentation, investigation, and treatment. Everything is here that a neurosurgeon could reasonably want in a textbook and far more than a paediatrician is likely to require.

There are numerous excellent x-rays accompanied by helpful line drawings to emphasize the key points. The quality of reproduction of these and indeed of all the illustrations is outstanding. The statistics are presented by ingeniously designed tables and are a rich source of information. The more recently developed investigatory techniques such as radioactive isotope brain scanning and ultrasonography of skull and orbit are described in detail but without sufficient critical assessment of their value compared with the more established methods of diagnosis in childhood.