and the reader) is that dealing with the contribution of pregnancy and perinatal complications to mental subnormality, and the highly complex interrelationships of these factors with social class. The least convincing part of the study is the definition of a 'CNS-1' group, presumed to have 'Organic brain defect' on the basis of having what sound rather nondescript neurological signs.

This admirable book leaves one with two strong impressions—first of the powerfulness of the epidemiological method, and secondly of the extent to which mental subnormality is a problem related to social circumstances. It may not be conclusively proved that this relation is a causal one, but the evidence is certainly strong enough to give further justification for an all-out attack on poverty and all its works—not only on the grounds of compassion but also of economy of human resources. However, the chances of this happening seem relatively slender at a time when the precepts of Samuel Smiles find more official favour than those of the Sermon on the Mount. All paediatricians and community health doctors should read this book.


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 of 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 in is the chapter on haemolytic disease of the newborn. The chapter on asphyxia neonatorum contains uninspired orthodox dogma including the tired and very unconvinced story of drowned 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 method. modern technique and underestimates of 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 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 'Paediatric 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.
If, as seems probable, the book is intended for neurosurgeons, then it is difficult to find any major fault. Little attempt has been made to write for the paediatrician to whom the early presentation of neurosurgical conditions will often have several non-neurosurgical explanations. Similarly the paediatric neurosurgeon working mainly in a child's hospital where he will be faced with those more obscure clinical problems about which the paediatricians consult him, will wish for more help concerning other paediatric diseases which may be confused with those dealt with in this book; for example the last chapter entitled 'Differential Diagnosis' is simply a list, without comment, of a wide range of childhood diseases. A description of the mimicry of intracranial tumours in some of these conditions would have been far more helpful.

This beautifully produced volume is nevertheless a valuable product of its distinguished publishers.

Inherited Disorders of Sulphur Metabolism.

Any publication of the proceedings of meetings of the Society for the Study of Inborn Errors of Metabolism is worthy of serious consideration. This Society is British in origin but now has an international membership including some of the foremost paediatric biochemists and biochemically orientated paediatricians in the world. The present publication is the proceedings of their July 1970 Symposium on the subject forming the title of this book. With individual authors being in virtually every case the acknowledged expert in their field, and the book appearing less than a year after the congress, it represents a most useful up-to-date account of these disorders, together with some interesting glimpses into the future. Not only are the biochemical lesions of cystinuria and cystinosis, of homocystinuria and cystathioninuria dealt with, but appropriately to the present time, considerable attention is given to the treatment of these conditions, particularly homocystinuria.

In addition to the more comprehensive treatment of these four classical disorders of sulphur metabolism, useful chapters are included on analytical techniques, and on methionine metabolism and methioninaemia. The value of the book is enhanced as individual authors have been encouraged to provide a comprehensive bibliography for their subjects; the drawback that the book carries is its cost which for a small book such as this is excessive.


This book presents a detailed analysis of the mortality and morbidity of 5249 children born with birthweight of less than 2.5 kg in the 'Schöpf-Merei' Maternity Hospital in Budapest between 1955 and 1963. Growth and development of 2267 of these infants born between 1958 and 1960 were studied for 3 years and some interesting observations are made. As expected, congenital anomalies, birth trauma, and blood group incompatibilities figured prominently both in the 'early' and 'late' mortality groups, and while the death rate between the ages of 1 and 36 months was still 12% in 1955 this had fallen to 6% by 1963. There was no direct correlation between birthweight and late mortality except in children with birthweight of less than 1 kg. No figures for congenital defects at birth are given, but 8-8% of children surviving the first month of life are found to have abnormalities and despite subsequent deaths their incidence is still 6-9% due to late ascertainment. At 3 years, 1 in 5 children were found to have some defect or another.

The analysis of incremental growth is particularly fascinating. Both boys and girls with low birthweights gain 0.5 kg more than children with normal birthweights in the first year of life. This weight gain is not subsequently maintained and was found to be less than in the normal group for both the second and third years of life. The increase in total body length, chest, and head circumference is also greater in the first year of life of the low birthweight babies than in the normal controls, and the authors conclude that this is probably due to good medical management.

The book is well produced and both tables and diagrams are clear. The nature of the data as well as the detailed statistical analysis does not make for easy reading, and it is a pity that the material is biased by the exclusion of 662 children with serious congenital abnormality, birth injury, and other defects. Occasional errors such as the comparison of the 1 month to 3 year mortality for low birthweight babies with the infant mortality for Hungary do not detract from the value of the work, and it should find a readership among doctors and statisticians interested in the fate of the immature and dysmature children and their growth patterns.