Book Reviews

Symposium on the Functional Physiopathology of the Fetus and Neonate: Clinical Correlations. 

The book is a report of a conference held in New York in February 1970. The participants included pathologists, obstetricians, paediatricians, geneticists, virologists, and biochemists. The first part of the book deals with some of the newer diagnostic approaches to the human fetus and its environment, from early pregnancy until delivery. There is also a good summary of the factors influencing the development, fertilization, and implantation of the ovum. One chapter is devoted to the detection of genetic disorders, particularly by amniotic fluid examination. Current methods of intrapartum monitoring of the fetus are described. There is a concise summary of the assessment of gestational age in both fetus and neonate.

The second part of the book is concerned with pathology. There is a good account of the pathology of aborted fetuses, providing information on the incidence of chromosomal abnormalities.

A chapter devoted to placental morphology in abnormal pregnancy lacks clarity compared to the rest of the book. There is a useful summary as to what is known about the prevalence and incidence of bacterial and viral infections.

The third part of the book is concerned with the need to improve the standards of perinatal pathology, and much of the rather lengthy discussion is not really applicable to the U.K.

The book should prove useful and stimulating to all who are concerned with fetal medicine. As with many such symposia, it provides useful summaries as to present knowledge and is also a valuable source of references.

Endocrine Regulation of Human Gestation.

This report is the result of deliberations by 10 of the most eminent workers in this field. The contents concern ovoimplantation and steroid production in the fetoplacental unit, the production of catecholamines and the renin-angiotensin system in pregnancy. There is a brief review of the current theories concerning the onset of labour, and finally a review of the endocrinology of abnormal early and late pregnancies.

The synopses are critical assessments of present beliefs, at the same time making clear where certain theories have little or no support on experimental or clinical grounds, for example the use of progestogens in threatened abortion.

This report will be of value particularly to practising clinicians to bring them abreast of current concepts, and to students of obstetrics and gynaecology to familiarize them with such facts of endocrinology of pregnancy as are established. It is not suitable for the advanced student of endocrinology because of its brevity, lack of discussion in depth, and the virtual absence of references.

Finally, the most challenging aspect is the extensive list of suggestions for further research, which itself reveals our astonishing ignorance in this subject and the urgent need for further research.


Intrauterine infection can be responsible for devastating damage to the developing fetal brain. The number of organisms now known to be capable of causing such damage is growing, and it seems likely that an infective aetiology for many cases of mental retardation in children may have been missed in the past. In this paperback volume of 84 pages, 9 papers on prenatal infections are presented. They were given by experts at an International Symposium held in Vienna in September 1970. Congenital listeriosis, toxoplasmosis, rubella, cytomegalovirus, herpes simplex virus, and Mycoplasma pneumoniae infections are discussed, and interesting information about all of them is summarized, with a useful list of references at the end of each paper. The problems of diagnosis, and the possibilities of treatment are reviewed. In addition, there is a paper on the helpfulness of fetal antibody in diagnosis of chronic intrauterine infections, a brief discussion of prenatal incubation period, and a study, the ethics of which are debatable, on the maternal–fetal distribution of drugs. The papers are in English, though this is clearly not a language in which two or three of the speakers feel at home.

The Dental Care of Handicapped Children.
By Joan Weyman (Pp. xii + 107; 6 figures. £2.00.) Edinburgh and London: E. and S. Livingstone. 1971.

Miss Joan Weyman, the author, and Mr. G. H. Steel, who has contributed a chapter on clefts of the lip and palate, are well known to students of British dental literature.

The author does not attempt to write a text on handicaps or a text on paedodontics but produces an amalgam of the two, including her approach to patient management and some prescriptions for treatment. She is obviously deeply clinically involved and many young practitioners will find her suggestions on patient