Book Reviews


This conference, devoted to muscle, was held at the Johns Hopkins Hospital, Baltimore, Maryland, in May 1969, and dedicated to the late Dr. G. Milton Shy.

The book contains 11 contributions which are individual essays or reviews on a particular topic, presumably the choice of the contributor. This fills 97 pages and a further 32 pages are devoted to 18 short and well-illustrated case reports of various neuromuscular disorders.

Though there is little in this volume that has not been previously published or is not included in one or other of the standard texts on neuromuscular disorders, it has the advantage that individual topics are dealt with in a fairly concise and digestible way.

The subjects include a review of the rare congenital and metabolic myopathies; a genetic approach to the nosology of the muscular dystrophies; a complex and exhaustive approach to classification of neuromuscular disorders; biochemical approaches to the study of muscle disease; a review of glycogen storage diseases of muscle, concentrating on biochemical genetics; genetic aspects of myotonias; hereditary ptosis; hypertrophic neuropathy; a broad review of neuropathies and myopathies in infancy and early childhood (with numerous clinical photographs); the genetics of spinal muscular atrophy; and arthrogryposis and its experimental production in chick embryos.

For the paediatrician, the most useful sections are the illustrative case histories in the second part of the volume and the two review articles on congenital myopathies and neuropathies and myopathies in infancy. The rest makes interesting reading on some of the recent trends in relation to muscle disease.

This book deserves a place in every library; but for the private collector, the money would be better spent on one or other of the recent more general texts on muscle disorders.


Though it is not obvious from the title, this book contains the proceedings of a meeting, largely of American paediatricians interested in immunology, who discussed a wide range of topics concerning development and deficiency of immunological function. Indeed, the range is far too wide as it is difficult to see the relation of immunological renal disease to the book's title. The date of the meeting is not given, but the editors naively claim that 'the papers and discussion were "updated"...'. The terms of immunodeficiency are not those recommended by a WHO Working Party a year ago, which is both unfortunate and dating.

In spite of these structural faults, the book starts very well, with two excellent brief reviews by Gitlin on the development of plasma proteins in humans, and by Hanson et al. on secretory IgA. After that it fades badly, and much is very scrappy. The scope is so wide and the styles so loose that most topics are touched on only superficially. Very little is of any clinical use. The book therefore cannot be recommended as a whole, though it is a useful source of reference on some subjects.


This book, as its title states, pretends to be nothing more than a paediatric guide for general practitioners. It is presented in two parts. The first, entitled 'General Comments on Treatment' proves to be a curious hotchpotch of facts and personal hobby-horses. It covers such varied topics as the side effects of a long list of drugs, a couple of pages on behavioural problems, a list of symptoms that Professor Illingworth believes should prompt the general practitioner to send the child to hospital (including, unbelievably, all febrile convulsions), some notes on antibiotics in general, and the characteristics of most of them in particular. A couple of pages are given to a plea to avoid abusing the use of drugs (supported by some tedious NHS costs and statistics), and there are some useful comments on the abuse of bedrest, diet, and sending kids back to school. There is a salutary list of common GP 'clangers'—though no one more than the GP knows the inner despair of living with the bereaved family of the child he misdiagnosed.

The second part, occupying two-thirds of the book, is in the form of a mini-encyclopaedia of diseases in alphabetical order. It is an 'ultra-filtrate' of the author's textbooks. There is an excellent empathetic section on counselling the parents of handicapped children and another on dying children. Generally, the psychiatry is weak, devoting only half a page each to jealousy, overactivity, negativism, and lying. Much more space is devoted to such organic illnesses as asthma (10 pages), epilepsy (8 pages), and coeliac disease (7