Book Reviews

Approach to the Medical Care of the Sick Newborn. By SOPHIE H. PIEROG and ANGELO FERRARA. (Pp. xii + 292; illustrated + tables. £5.15.) St. Louis: Mosby; London: Kimpton. 1971.

The authors, who work in Brooklyn, New York, set out to present 'practical guidelines to the physician and the staff caring for the daily needs of the newborn', and are earnestly well meaning. The first part of the book deals with perinatal mortality, administration and organization of services, and their evaluation. The second part is divided into 6 sections: dynamics of the perinatal period influencing the management of the infant at risk, newborn care, clinical significance of abnormal signs and symptoms, specific conditions of infants at risk, medical regimens in the neonatal period, and family and community response to the newborn's needs. There is an appendix in which some practical procedures such as umbilical catheterization, exchange transfusion, collection of blood samples, and bladder puncture are described, a glossary of definitions, a table of commonly used drugs and their recommended doses, 'formula' contents, and normal laboratory values for the neonatal period. A list of references is given at the end of many of the chapters.

The first part and the last section of the second part are repetitive and verbose. They could have been greatly improved by condensation to half their present length. The style is irritating to the English reader. For instance, sentences such as, 'in the intact family unit the interconceptional phase is a period of adjustment to a change of life style with added responsibilities', and (prenatal classes) '... should be relaxing, non-structured, and nonthreatening to the parent(s); this is more conducive to fuller expression of the parents to mutual problems'—leave one pondering the obscurities of jargon. The section dealing with clinical significance of abnormal signs and symptoms is more concise, and consists of a series of chapters dealing with conditions such as respiratory distress, jaundice, and cyanosis. They are arranged in tabular form, giving likely causes and laboratory aids to diagnosis. There are some important omissions, such as guidelines for temperature control in the low birthweight infant; some inadequately covered topics such as the monitoring of oxygen therapy (retrolental fibroplasia is not mentioned in the index) and ventilator treatment; and some frankly dangerous statements such as exchange transfusion being indicated, 'when the infant's serum bilirubin level (above 20 mg/100 cc on two successive laboratory determinations) does not respond to other methods used'. Some diagrams are not always self-explanatory, and the superimposition of line drawings of the fetus, and of the mother in labour on printed tables seems unnecessary and does not make for clarity. Though it has some useful features, this book cannot be wholeheartedly recommended.


This is surely one of the books which practising paediatricians and teachers can least afford to be without. Its style must be familiar to most readers of this journal. It consists of abstracts, each about 400 words long, of about 400 paediatric papers published between March 1970 and April 1971. Most of the papers are followed by comment, either by the editor or by an invited expert. Abstracts can appear rather dull when taken in bulk, even when they are as clear and informative as these. However the editorial comments remove any possible risk of dullness and make the book a thoroughly stimulating postgraduate course in advanced paediatrics. Many paediatricians, like the reviewer, have a row of past Yearbooks in a treasured place on their bookshelves, and it is very rarely that they do not provide valuable help in dealing with a difficult or unusual clinical problem. Devotees will only need to be told that this one follows the form of the previous ones and is at least as good. It is a pleasure to dip into anywhere, and an essential book to have and keep for reference.


The scope of this book is clearly described in its title once it is understood that the term 'hermaphroditism' is used here in the general sense of intersex disorders. Almost every aspect of this important subject and of its associated endocrine disorders is dealt with here, and the account given is clearly written, clearly illustrated, and admirably complete. It should perhaps be stated for those interested in this subject that there is no consideration of the transvestite or the trans-sexual, which is regrettable since it is felt that these authors must have important information to impart concerning these difficult and serious conditions. This omission is perhaps the only serious criticism which can be levelled at a book that has been thoroughly brought up to date since the first edition of 1958 by the inclusion of many recent advances, new work on sexual differentiation, and detailed accounts of chromosomal abnormalities and the syndromes concerned with them. This is altogether an excellent book which can be well recommended to those interested in this field.