Book reviews


This is a large and comprehensive reference book on disorders of the respiratory tract in children, costing £13.85. It is essentially for the specialist, but does contain much information which would be of use to the general paediatrician. Volume I deals with diseases of the larynx, bronchial tree, and lung. Volume II is not yet available, but will contain chapters almost entirely confined to the field of otorhinolaryngology. Volume I begins with a valuable, up-to-date, and altogether excellent chapter by Victor Chernick and Mary Ellen Avery on the Functional Basis of Respiratory Pathology. In 59 pages it covers, in a readable and compact form, an enormous amount of up-to-date information on respiratory function and pathological causes of abnormal function. It is surprising to find, however, no abnormal values for the FEV₁.

There follow sections dealing with history, physical examination, diagnostic and therapeutic procedures, intensive care of respiratory disorders, respiratory disorders in the newborn, infections of the respiratory tract, and noninfectious disorders of the respiratory tract, including congenital malformations. There are altogether 34 contributors, many of them distinguished in their own fields.

It is inevitable that there is some unevenness of standard, but it is more disconcerting that there are a considerable number of instances of unnecessary overlap of information. For example, values for vital capacity are given on pages 13, 110, and 111—that would not matter so much if they were not actually different—and for peak flow on pages 21 and 111.

If you find only one page reference in the index on the subject you wish to refer to and the information seems inadequate, don't be disappointed because if you search elsewhere in the book you will probably discover all the information you need, but it is a pity one has to search. For example, in the case of bronchogenic cysts one is referred to page 188, yet in the text it is mentioned also on pages 500, 506, and 394, the last giving by far the best coverage. Emphysema is discussed on pages 186 and 510. Cytomegalovirus infection is listed among the contents of Section 7 on infections of respiratory tract, but is actually discussed in a chapter on its own in Section 9, later in the book. Some degree of overlap is inevitable in a book of this kind but it does seem to be excessive in places. For a comprehensive book some conditions appear to receive scant treatment: for example, choanal atresia presents important problems of management in early infancy but receives less than half a page of text. Endotracheal intubation by oral and nasal routes is scantily dealt with.

However, despite these relatively minor reservations, the volume is a valuable reference book for all interested in diseases of the respiratory tract in children. One hopes that it will become a standard work and occupy a position in the library of every children's hospital.


Paediatricians with an interest in renal disease will find much of importance in this issue of the British Medical Bulletin, published by The British Council. It is devoted to the radiology of renal disease, with the scientific editorship in the capable hands of Dr. Sherwood, and an introduction by Professor Steiner.

Grainger reviews the renal toxicity of radiological contrast media, but only briefly touches on the important paediatric question of the possibility of an increased susceptibility of the infant kidney to such damage. Barnett and Morley describe the use of diagnostic ultrasound in renal disease; this is an attractive, non-invasive technique with considerable potential for the detection of congenital renal abnormalities. Joekes reviews the role of isotope and Rhys Davies concentrates on topographical scintigraphy of the kidney, but computer-assisted-blood-background subtraction and dynamic area-of-interest analysis of rapid sequence scintigrams, which seem to be the growing points of these techniques, are rather cursorily dismissed.

The description of the radiological appearances of medullary necrosis in infancy by Chripin, and the changes in the renal tract in spina bifida cystica by Williams are obviously of relevance to paediatricians, as is Hodgson's account of post-obstructive renal atrophy.

The physiology of the nephrogram is described by Kelsey Fry and Cattell. The articles by Lavender and Sherwood on the renal circulation in haemorrhagic hypotension and by Sidaway on small vessel changes in renal disease indicate the surprising definition of small detail that can be achieved by current radiological
techniques. Doyle’s contributions on the radiological patterns of uraemic bone disease and a comparison of radiological and histological techniques of its assessment are helpful. Saxton, Ogg, and Cameron report on the technique of percutaneous nephrostomy, which has been surprisingly neglected in the past.

The presentation is generally good, but Whiteside’s article on videocystographic studies has an illustration (Fig. 4) of such poor quality as is rarely seen nowadays; and in a collection of authoritative reviews such as this, it is a pity not to include the titles of the articles in the references.

The following articles will appear in future issues of this journal:


Childhood urolithiasis in Britain. By S. Ghazali, T. M. Barratt, and D. I. Williams.

