Book reviews


At the end of a successful symposium on a fashionable topic there is usually a demand by participants and those who would like to have taken part for publication of the proceedings. In most cases this results in an unsatisfactory book which, by the time it appears, has become out of date as a conventional textbook.

Thanks to the editorship of Professor Wilkinson, Parenteral Nutrition has avoided this pitfall and is probably the most up-to-date compendium of information about its subject at present available. If the reviewer has any criticism of the editing it is in the arrangement of the chapters which seem somewhat haphazard so that a reader interested, for instance, in the intravenous feeding of babies will not find all the relevant chapters grouped together.

The book consists of edited versions of around 30 papers, some mainly theoretical, others mainly practical—all submitted by workers of international reputation and many containing original work. Topics range from an authoritative review of amino acid requirements and metabolism by H. N. Munro to Professor Wilkinson's own paper on the complications of administration. There are sections dealing with theoretical requirements, with metabolic reactions to injury, with intravenous alimentation in particular conditions, with available solutions, and with technical details. There is much useful information on the choice of carbohydrate intravenous alimentation and of amino acid solutions for parenteral alimentation in various circumstances, on the place of intravenous fat, and on the metabolic responses to injury and their modification by treatment.

If any principle can be extracted from such a mass of detailed information it is that only a fairly profound knowledge of metabolism in health and disease enables a clinician to use such methods safely and sensibly, bearing particularly in mind that there is no point in providing amino acids as a source of energy and that, except in extreme circumstances, the organism is very well adapted to cope with temporary metabolic exigencies.

As a source of up-to-date and accurate information and of appropriate references to the literature, the book cannot be bettered and should be available as a bench book in every unit employing or intending to employ parenteral feeding as part of its therapeutic armamentarium.


This book is a comprehensive guide to diseases of the upper respiratory tract by a large team including paediatricians, otolaryngologists, surgeons, anaesthetists, and radiologists. It is clearly written, well presented, and the numerous photographs and diagrams are excellent.

Most sections begin with a chapter on the embryology, anatomy, and physiology of the region, followed by one on methods of examination. Subsequent chapters describe fully the clinical features and investigations of congenital and acquired diseases, and discuss medical and surgical treatment, the latter in considerable technical detail. There are useful sections on genetic and chromosomal abnormalities, radiology, and anaesthetics. Each section ends with a long list of references and the index is extensive and helpful.

I have chosen a few sections for individual comments. The indications for tonsillectomy are fairly presented, and British paediatricians will welcome the conservative approach to this operation which 'probably is performed much too frequently' and 'at times for reasons other than purely medical'. The tragedy of failing to diagnose deafness is rightly stressed and the importance of a multidisciplinary team in assessment and treatment is emphasized. The chapter on airways obstruction is authoritatively written from the Hospital for Sick Children, Toronto, where the mortality in 4500 admissions with acute laryngitis and supraglottitis (epiglottitis) over 5 years was only 3, a most impressive result. Clear advice on medical treatment and the indications for tracheostomy is given, though the role of endotracheal tubes is perhaps underemphasized.

The management of foreign bodies is thoroughly discussed and the size of the problem illustrated by the facts that the collection at Temple University Medical Center approaches 6000 and approximately '1000 foreign body deaths' occur every year in the U.S.A.

Who is this book for? The preface suggests medical students, residents, and practising paediatricians and otolaryngologists. The book is too detailed for medical students, but as a practising paediatrician I feel this is a most useful reference book which I would recommend to my residents and ENT colleagues.