Symposium at Leeds (1971) lives up to the high standard of recent years.

The disorders of organic acids or organic acidurias have been increasingly recognized and studied during the past 5 years and the book contains excellent descriptions of 8 such disorders including ketotic hyperglycinaemia, propionic acidemia, congenital lactic acidosis, and Leigh's encephalomyelopathy. There are, in addition, papers on primary hyperoxaluria and hepatic glycogen synthetase deficiency. Two papers by La Du and by a Swedish team headed by Professor Lindstedt were concerned with the metabolism of p-hydroxyphenylpyruvate in hereditary tyrosinaemia with most excellent detailed studies by the Stockholm group.

Finally, the mass spectrometer was linked with gas liquid chromatography, on the one hand, and computer matching on the other for the analysis of urine, serum, and other biological materials in a Norwegian screening programme for inborn errors of metabolism. The mass spectrometer was used by a Swiss team in the study of phenylalanine-tyrosine metabolism using deuterated DL-phenylalanine in another chapter.

It is obvious that papers offered in these meetings have become more scientific than clinical and this book will be of greater help to the biochemists working in the field of inborn errors than to their clinical colleagues. Nevertheless, the clinical information available is considerable and should alert the clinician to the possibility of this type of upset—particularly in the neonatal period—and encourage him to carry out symptomatic treatment of ketotic infants while seeking appropriate biochemical help at the earliest opportunity.

This is an excellently produced volume full of information, and it should be readily available on the library shelves of all biochemical genetics units and laboratories working in the field of inborn errors.


This third edition of what may be considered a classical text covers thoroughly the wide range of children's speech disorders, including structural abnormalities, stammering, and hearing loss, with a useful brief chapter on lateral dominance and speech. The categories of disorders are described in terms widely used by the medical profession, and the book should, therefore, be of use to the general practitioner and paediatrician in assisting him in the recognition and management of such disorders, assuring quick referral to the speech therapist.

The book is somewhat disappointing in its failure to take account of more recent work on deviant language acquisition in both linguistic and psychological areas, and a separate chapter on such work and its application to therapy would have been a welcome addition. Much of current thought would take issue with the continued use of categories such as 'aphasia' (developmental, expressive, or receptive) to describe language disorders in children, since the terms are derived from conditions seen in adult patients having suffered known brain damage. As the author herself points out, there is a fundamental difference between the child who has never experienced the use of normal language, with all the implications for intellectual development and education, and an adult whose language and communicating faculties are suddenly disturbed in middle age or later. In this sense 'aphasia' is an inappropriate and misleading term when used to describe failure to acquire language, and 'specific language learning disability' seems better able, as a term, to describe both this condition and our present state of knowledge about it.

On balance this is a useful reference book having the advantage of being based on solid clinical observation and experience.


This well-written, well-produced, and well-illustrated book provides even more than its title suggests. It must certainly be the best available account of the morbid anatomy of mental retardation—sufficiently detailed, yet not too technical for the clinician. It deals clearly not only with the specific mental retardation syndromes, but also—in a particularly interesting chapter—with the anatomical abnormalities seen in 'unclassified' mental retardation.

However, it is not only concerned with pathology. The first 120 pages discuss aetiology—a subject of bewildering complexity, considering that 'mental retardation' is simply a description of function and can be caused by an enormous variety of aetiological and pathological factors often acting in combination. The authors' treatment is always clear and often trenchant. The distinction between 'subcultural' and 'pathological' mental retardation is dismissed as a largely outdated hypothesis. (The reviewer confesses to having sometimes found it useful in introducing students to the subject.)

There is also an excellent and up-to-date coverage of the biochemical abnormalities found in mental retardation and of the relevant inborn errors of metabolism. There are many 1971 and 1972 references. Two particularly useful features are the chapter on Syndromes in Synopsis Form, and the appendices on methods of investigation. In the third edition perhaps the authors will add a section for the clinician on the investigation of the child with mental retardation—what investigations are worth doing when. Most of the information is already there, but it would be helpful to bring it together under a single heading.

Every doctor concerned with mental retardation would benefit from reading this book. The assessment and management of the mentally retarded child must be largely functional, but those who carry it out will find their ideas sharpened and clarified by the much clearer understanding of aetiology and pathology which this book provides.