Book reviews


This textbook is written and edited by Dr. Richard Behrman, from New York, with the collaboration of 29 contributors from disciplines allied to paediatrics. The volume has 21 chapters and contains a vast amount of factual information about the fetus and the newborn. It is easy to read and excellently edited. However, as is often the case with textbooks of multiple authorship, some chapters are first-rate while others are only mediocre. The sections on the high-risk infant, craniofacial problems, and ophthalmology are probably the best and provide a wealth of up-to-date material of educational value to the obstetrician and paediatrician. The chapters on physical examination of the newborn and gastrointestinal tract are disappointing and unhelpful. Both should be rewritten in future editions. It is a pity that there is no special section on genetics and counselling.

The illustrations and diagrams are clear and instructive. The appendix contains valuable physiological data and tables of drugs in current use in the newborn. It would be useful in future to include in the tables not only blood levels of the various drugs but also any side effects. The references are well chosen, very up-to-date, and accurate. It is gratifying to find many contributions from Europe, which is not often the case in American textbooks.

I enjoyed reading this book. It speaks with authority and gives sound practical advice. Special care baby units will be the poorer for not having a volume on their shelves.


Although knowledge of genetics is becoming increasingly important for doctors, this is only the second book directed primarily at the clinician. It is written by a paediatrician with longstanding interest in genetics, and a geneticist with wide clinical experience. The first part of the book deals with heredity and disease and rightly devotes much attention to the diseases which are common, the congenital malformations and the chromosome disorders. There are also descriptions of the straightforward single gene-determined disorders, and disorders where, without the mechanism being clear, there is recurrence in sibs. The text is lucid and the subjects of how the model for polygenic inheritance arose and how it is applicable to certain family patterns, how and when chromosome abnormalities occur, and how Bayesian methods are used for counselling in single gene disorders, are explained so clearly that one forgets previous difficulty in understanding them. A few examples of families who attended a genetic clinic illustrate some of the aspects of genetic counselling.

This first section will be of direct interest to all paediatricians and most will continue with enthusiasm to the special topics of the second section. These include haemolytic disease, teratology, transplantation, cardiovascular disease, and cancer. The third section consists of a valuable short guide to syndromes, where their distinguishing features are listed. The text is supplemented by simple diagrams and useful tables, and by a marvellous collection of pertinent clinical photographs. The latter justify the extra expense of this book.

This excellent book achieves what it set out to do, namely to present to clinicians basic genetics and its practical applications to clinical medicine. The book is both accurate and stimulating. While it can be read with absorption from cover to cover, its best place is beside the medical practitioner, in surgeries or outpatient clinics.


Part of a Postgraduate Paediatric Series, this book gives a simple account of most aspects of congenital heart disease, as well as dealing with diagnosis and management of acquired heart disease in children. It is concisely written and illustrated with line diagrams, and some well selected x-rays and angiograms. The book offers the general paediatrician a practical approach to management of heart disease, especially from the viewpoint of deciding when referral for further investigation, i.e. cardiac catheterization, is indicated. The authors do this well, e.g. 'If an infant is cyanosed in the first few days of life and particularly if that cyanosis does not improve with oxygen, it is useless to adopt a 'wait and see' attitude. He must be referred to a special centre for paediatric cardiology'. The book avoids the more academic aspects of congenital heart disease, and physiological mechanisms are briefly described. Appreciating the need to simplify, there are inherent dangers in this and it is important that 'simple' statements are accurate if not all the truth. If there are