Book reviews

cheaper form, despite errors, soon afterwards. Even the proceedings of the most excellent symposium have a limited life as works of reference.


This textbook of 486 pages is concerned only with the subject of leukaemia in childhood and the author has achieved an exhaustive cover of the subject. There is a chapter on general aspects of the disease, including discussion on incidence, aetiology, and pathophysiology, and also a description of other diseases associated with leukaemia. Clinical manifestations, morphological diagnosis, and differential diagnosis each have their own chapter. Special features of the disease are covered separately and the author deals with both common aspects, such as anaemia, coagulation abnormalities, bone involvement, and reproductive organ infiltration, and also discusses rare features including skin infiltration and cardiac arrhythmias associated with myocardial involvement. This chapter also deals with biochemical abnormalities seen in association with leukaemia. Another chapter covers unusual forms of leukaemia and yet another deals with rare diseases resembling it. Treatment of the disease itself, involvement of the central nervous system, and treatment of infections are all dealt with in great depth and give the reader the opportunity to consider the most up-to-date protocols. Advice is given regarding the time to stop treatment in long-term disease-free survivors. Thus the reader can consult this book and be sure of finding some comment on the vast majority of common and unusual problems occurring in association with the disease.

Finally, there is a chapter on the emotional aspects of leukaemia and in this Lascari reveals the reasons for the rest of the book being of such high calibre. It is clear that he has great personal experience in dealing with children with leukaemia and their families, and he has been able to set this out in such a way as to provide a reference textbook which is clear, easily readable, and full of up-to-date information and much wisdom. He is to be congratulated on the inclusion of several very recent references.

This book will, I believe, soon become the essential reference of any physician treating childhood leukaemia and will also prove of interest to those dealing only occasionally with the disease.


The appearance of a full-scale textbook of paediatrics by British (predominantly Scottish) authors is a notable event, signaling, perhaps, the completion of a phase of "catch-up growth" which paediatrics in this country was called on to mount when the subject found itself at a low ebb at the start of the postwar period in 1945. It can at once be said that this book has no reason to fear comparison with its two American counterparts 'Nelson' and 'Barnett' (formerly 'Holt'), which have hitherto sustained the needs of so many English-speaking paediatricians. Dimensionally it is a third larger than the former, and marginally larger than the latter. Indeed, its size is about the limit of what anyone can reasonably be expected to handle.

This raises the question of what purpose a textbook of this kind is aiming to serve. Probably most of those consulting it are wanting to refresh their memories about some uncommon condition or some piece of basic science which their clinical work has brought up, to check the facts about some abstruse theory, to find out what the current therapy is for some rarely encountered disorder, or to look up the dosage, or the dangers of this or that drug. That is, the need is for a reference book with up-to-date factual information easily located, and a guide to the sources of further information given by key references. Such aims are excellently, quite often brilliantly, met here. Numerous ingenious tables condense a great deal of complex material, and the text abounds with original diagrams. The basic sciences that underpin clinical paediatrics are strongly represented, with extended and authoritative treatment of Physical Growth and Development (Tanner, 67 pages), Developmental Assessment (Illingworth, 38 pages), and Chromosomal Defects and Disorders (Bain, 36 pages). The editors have succeeded in imposing a reasonably consistent and agreeably terse style throughout the text, despite the large number (72) of authors, and without eliminating the expression of an occasional personal foible or an idiosyncratic viewpoint.

As a book of reference, therefore, it would be hard to fault. The editors have clearly decided that the book should cover every branch of paediatrics. Skin conditions really demand colour illustrations, and this section might have been omitted with little loss; probably few readers would think of going to a general textbook for dermatological instruction. Similarly, the psychiatric section, though occupying 56 pages, necessarily deals cursorily with its subject matter, and is unlikely to be much consulted despite its high quality, which is a pity. In any future edition the editors might consider it preferable to forego the ideal of complete coverage in order to keep the size of the book within bounds.

The printing and lay-out are first-class; the standard of reproduction of the half-tone illustrations, however, is not. But x-ray illustrations are collected in a 70-page section of plates at the end of the book, and these are adequately reproduced—a good idea this. The whole impression is of a highly professional job.

The continued usefulness of a book such as this must depend upon the ability of the publishers and the editors to keep it up to date by bringing out a new edition every 4 or 5 years.

Meanwhile, unqualified congratulations to the two editors and their publishers for a major achievement; this book possesses all the ingredients of a successful venture.