

Treatment of Inborn Errors of Metabolism.

Current Treatment and Future Prospects. Proceedings of the Tenth Symposium of the Society for the Study of Inborn Errors of Metabolism. Edited by J. W. T. SEAKINS, R. A. SAUNDERS, and C. TOOTHILL. (Pp. xiv + 260; illustrated + tables. £7.00.) Edinburgh and London: Churchill Livingstone. 1973.

Some books are easy to read because they attract the reader's attention from the beginning, while others improve only if one perseveres through the first few chapters. This book falls into the latter category with disappointing papers on the treatment of phenylketonuria leading on to an absorbing review by Professor Charles Scriver on the 'Vitamin-responsive inborn errors of metabolism.' Indeed, the volume is worth getting hold of for this article alone. It also covers in some detail the tantalizing prospects of possible therapeutic approaches to neurodegenerative diseases, in particular lysosomal disorders such as the mucopolysaccharidoses and metachromatic leucodystrophy.

However, with the exception of Professor Woolf's short paper on 'Successes and mistakes in treating phenylketonuria', there is little guidance from the experts to clinical biochemists, paediatricians, and dieticians. One might expect more to be directed to the practical, rather boring, problems which need to be tackled on 'Treatment of inborn errors of metabolism' to improve the quality of therapy in the immediate future. Some of the most valuable practical information in fact relates to diagnosis rather than treatment, as exemplified by Dr. Lake's rectal approach to gangliosidosis and Batten's disease.

The price rise from £4.00 to £7.00 for this 250-page slim volume must restrict the market, but anyone with an eye to the future developments in this field will want to have this book.

Growing Up In Hong Kong. By ELAINE C. FIELD and FLORA M. BABER. (Pp. xviii + 178; illustrated + tables. H.K. \$35.00.) Hong Kong: University Press. 1973.

Departments of paediatrics and child health in medical schools and colleges throughout the world have deep and valuable relationships with the children and families of the societies in which they are an institution. The relationship involves both responsibility and opportunity; local experience must affect the content of teaching and teaching must have relevance to local circumstances.

Growing Up in Hong Kong reports the findings of a longitudinal study of the growth, development, and rearing of a group of nearly 800 children in Hong Kong between 1967 and 1972. This volume, which will be supplemented by further publications, describes and illustrates the origins and organization of the study, the family structure and living conditions in contemporary Hong Kong, the care of children, and feeding pattern of babies.

Three chapters are then devoted to the results of the survey in terms of the physical health of children, measurements of growth, and milestones of development. Once over the hurdle of birth and the neonatal period, infants in Hong Kong usually thrive well; perinatal and neonatal mortality rates are low. However, at about 4 to 5 months when weaning starts and milk intake is reduced weight gain begins to slacken and the incidence of infection rises. Growth in weight and height both slacken in the second year but recover later and continue at about the 25th centile for English children until puberty, which is early compared with Britain. Head circumference is also smaller in the Chinese and the authors regard it as an 'open question' whether this reflects poor brain growth in the presence of poor nutrition. Gross nutritional deficiency and skin infestation are rare, and boils and impetigo uncommon. The great problem is respiratory infections, both viral and bacterial, and streptococcal infection is common. The immunization programme was excellent and 90% of children had BCG, but this was not typical of all the children in the area. Milestones of development had to be adapted for Chinese children and in the second year many went through a period of marked shyness and irritability corresponding to the period of slowing of all aspects of growth. But by 3 years this had passed.

Analysis of data is still proceeding, but the value of the survey has already been shown and proven, not only for local purposes of teaching, priorities for health education, and social wellbeing, but also for wider comparison of the data of this society with those derived from longitudinal studies in other parts of the world.

Child health and total environment are intimately related; environment has almost infinite variation. The more local studies are available and the more they are planned to be comparable, the greater will be our understanding of the determinants of development and of our power to influence health. This study will take its place with others of different localities, and this volume can be thoroughly recommended.