

Book reviews

Nutrition and Fetal Development. 4th Edition. Edited by MYRON WINICK. (Pp. ix + 188; illustrated + tables. £7.70). London: Wiley. 1974.

Horizons in Perinatal Research. Implications for Clinical Care. Edited by NORMAN KRETCHMER and EILEEN G. HASSELMAYER. (Pp. xviii + 193; illustrated + tables. £8.25). London: Wiley. 1974.

These two volumes can be considered together, for the whole of the first and a large part of the second deal with various prenatal factors affecting fetal development. The first, *Nutrition and Fetal Development*, is better value, and is the second volume in the series 'Current Concepts in Nutrition'. 19 contributors provide 9 chapters, and between them they present old and new material on maternal undernutrition and fetal growth retardation, both in the human and in the experimental animal. Maternal biochemical markers of malnutrition, nitrogen balance in pregnancy, fetal cellular changes, and early and late postnatal consequences of fetal malnutrition are among the topics discussed. Perhaps the most interesting chapter, however, is that of Jean-Pierre Habicht and his colleagues who report studies on undernourished Guatemalan women which suggest that birth-weights of their babies can be increased by supplementary feeding during pregnancy. As the Editor, Myron Winick, says in his preface, there are about 300 million people in the world today who have been malnourished during early life. This book provides a useful and critical review of a subject which has, perhaps because of its socioeconomic and political implications, often been misrepresented in the past.

The second volume, *Horizons in Perinatal Research*, is less satisfactory because it is a report of a symposium sponsored by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (Stanford, California) which took place 4 years ago. The papers were given in two main sessions, the first devoted to environmental influences on maternal capabilities, and the second to genetic and chemical influences on development. Many of the contributors, such as Baird on sociological aspects and Kass on infection, give reviews of work already published. The effects of altitude on mother and fetus make interesting reading, but the consequences of lead and noise, for instance, are not considered in the papers on pollution. The discussion after the talks has been edited and summarized. A panel also discussed perinatal research in Africa and Europe. From opening and concluding remarks in the book one can surmise that national medicopolitical issues prompted this conference. Those engaged in perinatal research and practice, how-

ever, will not gain a great deal from the book at this late date.

Surgery in Infancy and Childhood. 3rd Edition. Edited by WALLACE M. DENNISON. (Pp. xx + 618; illustrated + tables. £5.00.) Edinburgh and London: Churchill Livingstone. 1974.

It is some indication of the growth of paediatric surgery that the first edition of this book in 1958 was written by two authors and in the third edition in 1973 the editor has thought it wise to include 19 contributors of whom 7 are 'pure' paediatric surgeons. The best parts of the book remain those of a general nature, particularly the chapters on elective surgery and trauma in children. Those chapters which deal with some of the more specialist aspects of paediatric surgery show the difficulties experienced by contributors in recognizing the line of demarcation between general knowledge and specialist techniques. For instance, the Astrup micro method of determining blood pH, PCO₂, and standard bicarbonate is mentioned in relation to metabolic acidosis but no advice is given on the management of metabolic acidosis; a nomogram is provided indicating the amount of blood required to raise the haemoglobin but no advice is given for correcting electrolyte imbalance; four operations with eponymous names are mentioned for the definitive treatment of Hirschsprung's disease, with no indication of their basic differences.

The editor accepts that opinions among numerous contributors will differ and frequently emphasizes this by pithy footnotes: some fundamental differences should have been settled—for instance one chapter asserts that the newborn is a good risk for even major surgery during the first week of life and another indicates that (in Hirschsprung's disease) definitive treatment should be delayed until the infant is considered big enough to withstand rectosigmoidectomy with little risk.

The quality of the publication is good with numerous effective illustrations and diagrams. There are, however, a disappointing number of printers' errors including some which are corrected by an erratum sheet, such as an x-ray printed upside down, and some not corrected, such as a reference to a 'nicornuate uterus' in a legend on p.356 (should it have been uni—or bi?).

This book, however, remains a valuable one for those for whom it is designed—the senior medical student, the family doctor, and junior hospital staff. The general discussion of broad principles is excellent, the index is complete and when extra detail is required the necessary references are quoted to provide it.