errors of metabolism to perinatal pharmacology, monosodium glutamate metabolism in the fetus and newborn, mineral metabolism, and the effects of ascorbic acid on drug-metabolizing systems; and the final section describes short- and long-term effects of opiates, ending with a discussion of the research goals in developmental pharmacology.

This book is primarily for the research worker. Much of the work presented concerns experimental animals, and because of differences in maturation of fetal enzymes between the various species and the human, and the role of the human placenta in drug metabolism, extrapolation has to be made with care. Perhaps one of the most interesting contributions is one showing that genetic differences in drug metabolism (in the mouse) are accurately reflected in fetal cell cultures. Another presents evidence that catecholamines will enhance neuronal and glial cell growth in cerebellar explants (from the chick embryo); while preliminary results (in the mouse) suggest that growth retardation induced by opiates might be related to blockage of acetylcholine release. However, as was frequently pointed out in discussion, relevance to the human situation is uncertain and the paediatrician should not look to this volume for practical pharmacological guidance. Nevertheless there is much of interest here, and it is clear that this is a field which deserves a great deal of skilled attention.


Originally conceived as a 'small book for the student or practitioner interested in the care of children', Metabolic, Endocrine, and Genetic Disorders of Children has grown into a three-part textbook with 69 contributors. After a general discussion on the nature of metabolic disorders and chromosome abnormalities, the first volume covers endocrinology. Abnormalities of carbohydrate, amino acid, lipid, and pigment metabolism make up much of the second volume, which also includes sections on purine and metal metabolism and renal tubular disorders. The title of the book has not been allowed to limit the contents of the third volume, which is largely devoted to the 'collagen diseases' and disorders affecting blood, muscle, bone, skin, and the cardiovascular system. While this subdivision into three parts makes for easy handling, the reader who has settled comfortably with Volume I on his knee may be irritated to find that the 110-page index is out of reach in Volume III.

Although some of the contributions are excellent, on the whole this is a disappointing book. The Editors' rather permissive approach to the team of contributors has resulted in a somewhat unbalanced product which gives the impression that the space devoted to each topic has been largely determined by the author's enthusiasm. 10 pages on obesity are followed by 39 pages devoted to porphyrin and pigment metabolism. Variation in style and presentation, which is almost inevitable in a multi-author book, makes it difficult to get a feel for the text. More important, there is considerable overlap of material presented in different chapters or sections. Metachromatic leucodystrophy is discussed in the section on lipid storage disorders (Vol. II) and then reappears among the 'Fibro-chondro-osteo disorganization' problems in Vol. III. Unfortunately, it does not appear in the Index. Unnecessary repetition is particularly common in the sections on adrenal and thyroid disorders which make up two-thirds of the endocrine text.

It would be incorrect to describe this as a thoroughly modern book, and the reader searching for up-to-date information may be disappointed. Many of the chapters seem to have been completed several years ago and their reading lists contain few references to work published after 1968. This is particularly striking in fields which have advanced rapidly in recent years, such as pituitary and hypothalamic disorders. The book may also fail the clinician looking for guidance. For example, he will search in vain for helpful advice on antenatal diagnosis, the use of plasma concentrates in bleeding disorders, or the long-term treatment of phenylketonuria.

Metabolic, Endocrine, and Genetic Disorders of Children aims to provide a wider discussion of topics than that usually found in conventional paediatric textbooks. In its present form, however, it may not appeal to the reader who already has access to the more detailed textbooks available on paediatric endocrinology or metabolic disorders.