Book reviews


Paediatric urology is advancing so fast that it is almost impossible to present all the latest information in textbook form. However, the topics included in this book have been cleverly chosen as many old problems are reviewed in the light of up-to-date knowledge, and the information is distilled into the most readable form. Chapters include discussion on bladder defence mechanisms in infection, management of megaureters, and temporary and permanent urinary diversion in children. Old chestnuts such as cryptorchidism and renal dysplasia are brought up to date.

For us all there is a philosophical discussion on enuresis and for the specialist, sections on renal hypertension, renal transplantation, and the management of testicular tumours in childhood. In all there are 19 topics discussed by enthusiasts and experts on both sides of the Atlantic. They make compulsive and exciting reading. There is a little one might differ with in the more controversial topics such as the routine use of gonadotrophins in cryptorchidism, but Dr. Lattimer and his colleagues from New York emphatically (and rightly) insist that all testes should be in the scrotum by 5 years. The section on distal urethral stenosis is almost enough to convince the most sceptical that such a condition exists.

This is a splendid book which will appeal widely to both paediatric urologists and nephrologists and will also offer much to the paediatrician.


There has been an obvious lack of any regular series of reviews of topics in paediatric pathology. The new ‘Perspectives in Pediatric Pathology’ series must be welcomed as helping to fill this gap. This particular volume follows the pattern set by its predecessor with a series of nine contributions from American authors which vary widely in both style and quality. Three outstanding reviews, which should prove of considerable value to pathologists and paediatricians are those on leucodystrophy, Hirschsprung’s disease, and cystic fibrosis. All are supported by adequate lists of references. The papers on peripheral neuroectodermal tumours and DiGeorge’s syndrome are of more specialized interest. I was disappointed to find such an important subject as sudden death in infancy handled in so brief and superficial a manner. In contrast I found the section on hyaline membrane disease almost totally incomprehensible due to the authors verbosity and obscure phraseology. The title, ‘Hyaline membrane disease and related spectrum of neonatal pneumopathies’, gives a fair idea of the style of this contribution. The section on fetal growth and placental pathology contains useful information and a good set of references but suffers from the attempt to cover a vast subject in a small space. The review of organ culture of human tissues in paediatric pathology, with which the book concludes, gives an indication of the scope of the techniques available but is far from exhaustive.

This book will be a useful addition to hospital and medical school libraries and many of the articles will be referred to frequently by paediatricians and pathologists. The high price will undoubtedly deter the individual from purchasing it.


The attempt to consider the placenta as an organ in isolation from mother and fetus has severely limited the value of most previous books on the subject. Peter Gruenwald has recognized the artificiality of such an approach and, with a group of distinguished American and European authors, has produced a book in which the interactions between mother and fetus through the placenta constitute the central theme. Development, structure, morphometry, physiology, immunology, and pathology of the placenta are discussed in a series of well written chapters. These are placed in perspective by the chapters of maternal influences on fetal growth, on the implications for fetal growth of placental abnormalities, on methods of detecting fetal deprivation in utero, and on the immediate and long-term effects of placental dysfunction on growth and development after birth. This wide range of topics dovetails together in a remarkably successful way and allows the reader to assess the relative importance of the various structural and functional features discussed and to pick out for himself those areas where there is doubt or disagreement. Although some chapters are based on well known published work, many contain new information from unpublished studies or indicate some new approach. All have well chosen bibliographies.

The printing is of reasonable quality with clear text, diagrams, and tables. Some loss of clarity has resulted from the printing of photomicrographs also in the text, on semimatt paper, but this is justified if it has allowed production at a sensible price.

Peter Gruenwald and his collaborators are to be congratulated on this fine volume which deserves a place on the bookshelf of every serious student of the perinatal period, whether obstetrician, paediatrician, physiologist, or pathologist.