Book reviews


The author is a member of the research team headed by Professor John and Dr. Elizabeth Newsom of the Child Development Unit at Nottingham University. With the help of several neighbouring Medical Officers of Health, she collected a representative study group of 122 deaf and partially hearing children (72 boys and 50 girls) under the age of 7 years. Because 47 of the study children were aged between 3 years 6 months and 4 years 11 months it was possible to draw useful comparisons with the findings of the Newsom’s well-known recent study of normal 4 year olds growing up in an urban community. The research was based on a tape recorded personal interview with the mother in the home, employing a detailed standard questionnaire, which allowed for further probing where the author considered this desirable. The record covered practically every aspect of the family’s daily life, as well as the mother’s version of her child’s medical history, therapeutic experiences, and educational training. From this mass of material emerges a vivid picture of their difficulties and abiding sense of bereavement, but also some of the occasional shining rewards of teaching an observant, adventurous, young deaf child to understand and control the world of people, objects, and happenings in which he lives.

The subjects discussed include basic habit training, play, problems of discipline, attitudes of sibs, relatives, friends, and neighbours, the helpfulness or otherwise of medical and educational experts, their knowledge or lack of knowledge in coping with hearing aids and other electronic equipment, of advantages and disadvantages of attendance at special units or schools, particularly residential schools, and at ordinary nurseries or schools. The author’s sensitivity and compassion are apparent in her sympathetic handling of questions regarding marital supportive relationships and of parental decisions regarding the possibility of further children. The unavoidable shortcomings of the interview situation in which the research worker must rely upon the accuracy of the information she is given are frankly admitted.

It is therefore a pity that the author was unable to observe the children’s behaviour more systematically for herself and that in her listing of aetiology she does not make it clear that the tables on pages 35 and 36 are based on hearsay evidence. It is difficult for a paediatric reader to credit that from the 63 listed cases, 27 were due to maternal rubella and only 2 to genetic causes, though on page 251 it is stated that 10 of the children had deaf sibs; nor does the author seem to be aware that in certain groups of children at risk, hearing may rapidly deteriorate during the first 2 years, i.e. the most vitally important period for language acquisition, so that it is possible for a baby of 6 to 9 months to respond acceptably to the usual baby screening tests who at 24 months is appreciably handicapped. In view of numerous and sometimes justified complaints of delayed or unkindly delivered diagnosis it is comforting to read (on page 157) that more than two-thirds were satisfied at the way they were informed and many expressed warm gratitude for their consultants. These are perhaps harping criticisms of an otherwise unique and helpful study. The literary expression is clear and the examples well chosen, so that the children spring to life from the printed pages. The book is well produced and carefully indexed. It should be studied by all professional workers concerned with young children with hearing and speech difficulties.


This book is sponsored by the International Union Against Cancer (UICC). The hope of the editors and authors is that both well established and recently acquired information on treatment be widely disseminated so that paediatricians, haematologists, surgeons, and workers in other cancer fields who deal only infrequently with children having malignant disease may become familiar with recent thought and practice in a field where many changes have recently occurred.

The book is a multi-author text, and shows great variation in style and content in the different chapters. It is divided into two main sections. The first consists of general chapters dealing with aetiology and epidemiology, clinical presentation, and the principles of surgery, radiotherapy, and chemotherapy. The pathology of childhood tumours in general is discussed in this section, along with the infections seen with increasing frequency in association with intensive therapy. There is an important chapter on the general care of the children and their families with reference to long-term follow-up. The chapter on facilities and cancer registration highlights the deficiencies which exist at present and how they might best be improved. The second main section deals with the individual tumours in separate chapters. Embryonal rhabdomyosarcomas have been dealt with in several chapters because of the multiplicity of the sites of origin, and the therapeutic advice varies for the same tumour in different chapters. Other duplications include details of drug dosages and toxicities, and if a further edition of this book is contemplated it would benefit from tailoring in these respects.
There is little reference to the immunological work in paediatric malignancy, and to the use of nuclear medicine and radiological techniques in diagnosis.

The overall impression of the book is one of optimism, and in this respect it is worthwhile reading for those who are not conversant with the present achievements and cure rates in this important field.


This book has been written by the staff of the Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne. It is based on their experience of 1689 children with leukaemia or malignant tumours, who have been treated between 1950 and 1972, a period during which the outlook for children with many forms of malignant disease has improved enormously.

Although this is a multi-author book, and a relatively long one, skilful editing has eliminated the tedious repetition of the same facts in different chapters, which has been such an irritating feature of other similar books in recent years. However, the authors show how vital it is for both clinicians and pathologists to co-operate fully in the treatment of children with such potentially fatal conditions, if the best results are to be achieved for the child and its family.

Many of the malignant conditions of childhood, which in the past were inevitably fatal, can now be effectively treated, particularly if the disease is diagnosed early and managed correctly from the start. It has thus become increasingly important for all doctors, both in general practice and in hospital, who are involved in the care of children, to be aware of the existence of these rare conditions and of the need to obtain the best treatment as quickly as possible. The book contains a comprehensive and up-to-date account of the natural history and management of cancer in children. It should certainly be available in any department concerned with the treatment of children with malignant disease.


This large, beautifully produced, and exceedingly expensive book is the latest of a number of new books which have been published on this subject in the last few years. Previously Frank Ford's classic monograph, based largely on his personal experience at Johns Hopkins, was the main reference source, and though it remains a superb account of many clinical disorders, it has drawbacks in practical use. It is disease- rather than problem-orientated, so it is not always helpful in discussing the diagnostic possibilities in particular clinical situations, and it has been overtaken by the rapid advances in understanding of neurometabolic disorders.

Swaiman and Wright's textbook, which has multiple authorship, overcomes the first of these problems by being written in 3 sections. The first 84 pages discuss history taking, examination, and diagnostic methods. The second section of nearly 200 pages discusses symptoms and signs of neurological disease and provides a problem-orientated approach to paediatric neurology. In this section, extensive tables provide useful checklists. The remaining 800 pages describe neurological diseases systematically. This sensible approach generally works well, though the placement of chapters is not always logical—thus mental retardation and disorders of speech and language come in the problem section, whereas seizure disorders and learning disabilities come in the disease section. Furthermore, it sometimes leads to disorder being described twice—for example cerebral gigantism has two separate brief descriptions which are not cross-referenced, and incidentally neither of which would be likely to help the clinician make this diagnosis for the first time.

The neurometabolic and degenerative diseases are given an excellent and (for the present) up-to-date description, and in these as in all other chapters the reference lists are huge with a high proportion of recent papers.

The production and lay-out are beautiful. There are two volumes, both of which contain the complete index. The illustrations and tables are of very high quality. It is a pity that the price of this superb book will be prohibitive to most private purchasers in this country.


The second edition of this textbook, published 4 years after the first, has been extensively revised in the light of recent knowledge and expanded accordingly. The three authors have taken care not to isolate gastroenterology from general pediatrics and have indeed maintained the theme of the first edition: to bridge the gap between general discussions of gastrointestinal problems in paediatric textbooks and the standard gastroenterology texts.

The book consists of 37 chapters and is organized into three sections. The first of these deals with common gastrointestinal symptoms and signs and is probably more useful for the doctor starting a career in paediatrics, though some of the points are worthy of repeated emphasis. The second section describes disease entities in a lucid and problem-orientated manner. Problems of the small and large bowel, liver and biliary system, and finally the pancreas, are dealt with comprehensively. Understanding of the normal function and