Book reviews

Clinical Pediatric Nephrology. Edited by ELLIN LIEBERMAN. (Pp. 589; illustrated + tables. £31.20.) Oxford: Blackwell. 1976.

Twenty-one authors, mainly American, have contributed to this book, which is divided into three parts. The first consists of 8 chapters, each devoted to the 'work up' of specific presenting complaints, hypertension, haematuria, proteinuria, abdominal masses, uraemia, short stature, and polyuria. Another chapter is concerned with abnormalities of plasma composition. These chapters consist mainly of extremely comprehensive lists of questions to ask in the family, past, and present histories, and of possible findings on examination. Equally long lists of possible abnormalities in haematological, biochemical, radiological, and 'special' investigations are included. This approach is unfamiliar to British readers, is rather heavy going, and makes for a great deal of repetition.

The middle section is concerned with management of renal diseases. The standard is uneven and again includes too much repetition. The chapter on urinary infection is a useful review of current concepts, and that on hypertension is refreshingly concise. Renal tumours and congenital malformations are well described. The best chapters are those on acute and chronic renal failure, including dialysis and transplantation.

The last section on 'Special Topics' consists of 3 chapters. The first is a critical discussion of renal function tests; the next an excellent review of the role of renal biopsy in diagnosis and prognosis; and finally a chapter devoted to the use of computers in medicine, especially as applied to a dialysis programme, which conjures up a rather horrifying picture of machines taking over from men.

The book is well presented, the illustrations of renal biopsy material excellent, the list of references extensive. This is not a comprehensive textbook of paediatric nephrology. For example, there is no full discussion of Henoch-Schönlein nephritis in any one chapter. It features in 3 of the introductory chapters, in 3 separate chapters on management, and in the chapter on renal biopsy.

The book provides a teaching programme aimed at those in specialist training, and must therefore be of rather limited appeal in this country.

MARTIN MONCRIEFF

Prevention of Handicap Through Antenatal Care. IRMMH Reviews of Research and Practice, 18. Edited by A. C. TURNBULL and F. P. WOODFORD. (Pp. vi+175; illustrated+tables. US \$15.95.) Amsterdam: Excerpta Medica. 1976.

This book consists of a collection of talks commissioned by the Institute for Research into Mental and Multiple Handicap, one of whose concerns is that research work should find practical application in the prevention and treatment of such disorders. 22 speakers, many noted for their own research contributions, surveyed topics in the antenatal field for audiences of health visitors, general practitioners, and social workers between September 1974 and March 1975. Their subjects covered a wide range, including among others genetic disease and counselling, teratogenic and other effects of drugs on the fetus, the several influences of smoking, nutrition, and infection, the biochemical and cytogenetic detection of anomalies, and the usefulness of fetal monitoring. The audiences seem to have been well served by succinct, up-to-date reviews whose collection here makes them available to a wider public. Those concerned with neonatal medicine will find this a useful book for occasional reference. They may find especially helpful the essays on such obstetric topics as hormone changes preceding premature labour, those dealing with the various aspects and tests of fetal well being, and the value of continuous fetal monitoring; much new ground has been covered in these areas within the past few years, and the essentials are clearly set out here. Altogether this short volume gives a clear idea of the various ways in which fetal well being can be maintained, and only good can come of the wider dissemination and implementation of this knowledge.

PAMELA A. DAVIES

Pediatric Therapy 5th edition. Edited by HARRY C. SHIRKEY. (Pp. 1405; illustrated+tables. £21.75). London: Kimpton. 1975.

The fourth edition of this beautifully produced book was reviewed in 1972 in the *Archives*, 47, 840. It is always difficult to do justice to a 1400-page textbook after a short time available for reading and studying it. The appearance of the fifth edition therefore gives the reviewer a welcome chance to assess how useful the fourth edition has been to him in the past 4 years.

On the whole, the comments in the previous review seemed valid—the book has been referred to rather little for advice on common and major problems or for the handling of emergencies. On the other hand, it has proved more useful than expected for consultations about some of the rarer problems which appear in paediatric outpatients and has often been really helpful—though shortly before writing this review it let me down on spondylolisthesis, laryngocele, and recent parotid swelling. Though there are a number of alterations and new chapters in the new edition, much is unchanged—including the management of febrile convulsions and obesity which were gently criticized in the last review.

The doubts about the value of books on therapy remain, but this certainly seems the most useful one available.

ROGER ROBINSON