Book reviews


The first edition of this monograph appeared a decade ago and enjoyed great popularity among paediatricians because it was authoritative yet concise. In the field, advances have been occurring rapidly and those with a special interest in this subject have been waiting impatiently for the promised second edition for several years. The long wait has been worthwhile. The general format of the new edition resembles that of its predecessor and the knowledge of the last decade including results presented in abstract form in 1976 have been incorporated without loss of the style which comes from two authors working in such harmony that the book reads as though it came from one pen.

To mention two authors slightly unfairly, for the assistance of A. L. Schwartz was obtained in writing the opening chapter, a brief review of mammalian carbohydrate metabolism with special reference to man during critical periods of development. This information is available in a variety of other sources but is pertinent insofar as the reader of later chapters may wish to refer back to basic concepts without picking up another book. As in the first edition I fail to appreciate the detail given to maternal metabolic adjustments in pregnancy in the second chapter, but everyone will appreciate the synopsis of human fetal metabolic and endocrine changes which are now documented largely thanks to advances in assay methodology. Similarly the many advances that have occurred from neonatal studies are comprehensively marshalled in the third of the introductory chapters that make up the first section of the book.

This edition, as did the first, scores much higher in the four succeeding sections which are devoted to problems of the newborn, hereditary metabolic disorders, hypoglycaemic syndromes in infancy, and sugar malabsorption syndromes. Here the authors have provided a notably clear account of the differential diagnosis of the symptom complexes but have backed up descriptions of specific diagnosis with useful case reports of their own or culled from the literature. Another excellent feature is the clear description of all appropriate diagnostic tests including points of detail such as blood collection technique.

In the book there is a tendency for the trees to be given more prominence than the wood, which may make for lengthy reading in some sections. It is clear that the authors have been forced, rather than having fallen, into this position by their desire to be fair to the large amount of modern literature at their disposal. The reader acknowledging this, appreciates the authority of the monograph which will ensure for it an even greater respect than that which the first edition enjoyed.

R. D. G. MILNER


This is not a comprehensive textbook of paediatric hepatology but a series of papers presented at a meeting held in Paris in June 1975 to discuss the significance of recent advances in some aspects of paediatric liver diseases. Each of the 24 chapters is by contributors of the highest calibre who are active participants in clinical research in liver disorders. The reader will find authoritative reports on disorders of bilirubin metabolism in the newborn (4 chapters), some form of chronic cholestasis dating from infancy (4 chapters), and the importance of hepatitis B surface antigen in paediatric liver disease (4 chapters). The nature of liver disease in alpha-antitrypsin deficiency is covered in 3 chapters. Rye's syndrome and liver tumours are dismissed with one chapter each. The difficulties still encountered in the surgical treatment of biliary atresia are well documented in Valayer's account of his experience of 35 cases. The considerable problem to be overcome in establishing liver transplantation as a therapeutic step are highlighted in Starzl's report of his experience of 56 paediatric patients.

Although the papers were prepared to provoke discussion, and show inevitable variability in style and, due to time-limitation, in content, this well presented book can be recommended as a useful review of these topics.

Two papers concerning the management of extrahepatic portal hypertension, one advocating continuation of nonoperative management if at all possible into adult life while the other suggests that porto-systemic shunting be performed before the age of 6 years, highlight what a tragedy it is that this book has been published without any record of the discussion. Even an edited version would have considerably enhanced its value. A factor in the decision to omit this may have been the untimely death of Dr. Nathalie Masse who worked so hard to make this conference a success. This reviewer searched in vain for any acknowledgement of this.

ALEX P. MOWAT


The first (1971) edition was 'strongly recommended' in this column, a verdict which can readily be repeated for this new edition and with the addition of 'very'.

It comes from the staff of the Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne, which has established itself as one of the leading paediatric centres of the world. The same team was responsible for the recent authoritative text, Tumours of Infancy. There is a pleasantly down-to-earth, trenchant quality about the book's style, reflecting these agreeable characteristics in the Australian temperament. But I did find the use of italics plus often an additional heavy line in the margin, for emphasizing a statement, somewhat overdone and apt to evoke the response, 'No need to shout'. Illustrations are mainly diagrammatic, and they are effective.

Any book on paediatric surgery is likely to deal well enough with straightforward issues, intussusception, oesophageal atresia, pyloric stenosis, and the like. So I sampled instead a number of difficult conditions; difficult because either complex, contentious, confusing, or confused: recurrent abdominal pain, constipation, ureteric reflux, funnel chest,