Book reviews

Child Health in the Community. A Handbook of Social and Community Paediatrics. Edited by Ross G. Mitchell. (Pp. 313; tables. £8.00.) Churchill Livingstone: Edinburgh. 1977.

Donald Court has written a foreword welcoming this book. He is right. It is an excellent book, as I would expect from Ross Mitchell and his co-authors. The parts of the book are: Introduction; The Child and his Needs; The Maintenance of Health; Services for Children; and Children at School.

I found the two chapters on the School Health Service by Frank Bamford, that on the adolescent by Terence Bruce, and a chapter on primary paediatric care by J. W. Barber, Professor of Primary Care at the University of Glasgow, were specially good, but so were Philip Pinkerton and Michael Rogers and John C. Spencer, and the rest of the authors too.

Did you know that in an average practice of 2500 one may expect to see a new case of congenital heart disease every 5 years, a new case of mongolism every 10 years and a new cleft palate every 15 years? The general practitioner does not see the cases that are the 'ordinary' cases of the paediatrician. But he does see many cases of acute infection of the upper respiratory tract and he has 30 cases of asthma, 60 cases of enuresis, and 60 cases of recurrent abdominal pain. If he treats them properly he will have plenty to start on. I suppose that the paediatrician gets 30 minutes a case, and the GP 5 minutes a case usually; but provided he can make the time for them, enuresis and recurrent abdominal pain are well within his capacity. Conversely, I do not think the GP sees enough variety of cases of spina bifida or cerebral palsy or mental deficiency for

him to see them 'five at a time at a monthly clinic'; they must surely be seen at intervals by the handicapped children's centre. It is good if they are seen as well by their own GP, but that alone is not good enough for them.

On a small point, the chapter by J. H. Barber has the merit that the reading matter is broken up by the inclusion of tables. Would illustrations have helped too? The cost of an illustrated textbook would have to be considered. This book is very good value as it is, so perhaps we should be content.

R. C. MAC KEITH

Fairbank's Atlas of General Affections of the Skeleton. By RUTH WYNNE-DAVIES and T. J. FAIRBANK. (Pp. xiii+262; illustrated+tables. £22.00.) Churchill Livingstone: Edinburgh, London, and New York. 1976.

The first edition of this book, published in 1951, is an acknowledged classic and its new authors wisely have not simply tried to revise it. They have rewritten it in a style and format most appropriate to the present day knowledge and understanding of the subject. They have retained the original concept of an atlas to guide the user to the diagnosis of rare conditions in which there is a major skeletal component. Some readers will regret the omission of case histories which were an important part of the first edition. However, without vastly increasing the size of the book these can no longer be included.

The addition of genetic information which was lacking in the first edition has added enormously to the second. Genetic advice is now one of the most important facets of the management of the patient

and the family suffering from any of these disorders.

An atlas is only of use if it helps the reader to find what he is looking for. The initial section page xi on diagnosis is thus essential as it sets out the classification used in the following sections of the book. Bone dysplasias are grouped in the first section under the part of the bone predominantly affected, e.g. epiphyseal, metaphyseal, vertebral, or combinations of these, etc. I would have found it helpful if the classification group could have been repeated under the individual dysplasias subsequently described. Other sections cover Inborn Errors of Metabolism, Metabolic Bone Disease, Endocrine Disorders, Neoplasia, and Trauma and the inevitable Miscellaneous. Each condition is described in a standard manner under headings such as aetiology, inheritance, frequency, clinical and radiographic features, etc. This is not meant to be a textbook of paediatrics or orthopaedics, so comments on treatment are brief. In trying to cover the whole range of generalized skeletal disorders it is impossible to include all the more recently described conditions, some of which have not yet been clearly defined.

The authors accept that the second edition like the first will in time become outdated and need revision. Nevertheless I think they have succeeded admirably in producing a worthy successor to the first edition. Anyone who has to deal with bone disorders will find the book invaluable with its numerous illustrations. The cost is high and it is a pity that the radiographs which are such an important part of the book lose so much detail and quality in their reproduction.

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