Neurodevelopmental Problems in Early Childhood. Assessment and Management. Edited by C. M. Drillien and M. B. Drummond. (Pp. 499; illustrated + tables. £20.50, hardback.) Blackwell: Oxford. 1977.

It is always a pleasure to review a book like this one which has been conceived and written to meet a genuine need. Too many books sent to the editorial office are either transcripts of papers given at symposia or further accounts of subjects on which there are already several similar works. I do not know of any other volume which covers the same ground as this new textbook, and it is certainly one which has been needed by doctors and others who work in developmental assessment and the care of handicapped children. It is large enough to be detailed and comprehensive, and 27 experienced authors have contributed, including some of the best known names in this field. They properly include some of the important nonmedical workers in assessment centres.

Roughly half the book is concerned with examination and assessment, and the other half with the common developmental and neurological disorders of early childhood—such as mental retardation, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, and problems of speech, vision, and hearing. The sections on developmental assessment contain rather too many, long, compressed tables, and would have benefited from more illustrations. In this respect the well-illustrated accounts of developmental assessment by Ronald Illingworth, Dorothy Egan, and Mary Sheridan are easier for the newcomer to follow. This book actually contains no photographs, but in some chapters this omission is more than compensated for by the attractive and very informative line drawings (by an artist whose name I could not discover).

The chapters on disorders are mostly good, rightly concentrating on the major features of the important conditions, and avoiding catalogues of rarities. The ones on cerebral palsy and on hearing loss seemed particularly helpful.

The importance of developmental problems and their management is increasingly recognised; this book will be of great value to those who deal with them, and especially those training to do so.

R. J. ROBINSON

The Place of Birth. Edited by S. Kitzinger and J. A. Davis. (Pp. 265; illustrated + tables. £7.50 hardback.) Oxford University Press: Oxford. 1978.

This refreshing book was born of discussions which took place at the invitation of the National Childbirth Trust between obstetricians, paediatricians, psychiatrists, psychotherapists, statisticians, sociologists, midwives, and general practitioners.

It presents the views of 22 authors who work in these fields and who have a common concern about the direction modern obstetrics appears to be taking, particularly in its increasing rejection of home delivery. The fact that one of the editors is Professor John Davis will, I believe, encourage paediatricians to read the book in the certainty that even if controversial and provocative it cannot be frivolous.

Among the questions discussed are: How far may antenatal care be perfected to select the 'safe' home confinement? Is the policy of hospital births for all growing too fast and too far, as judged from an analysis of regional statistics? Should the new obstetric techniques which have taken such a hold in recent years be more carefully evaluated, and is the hospital truly a place of minimal risk (in the broader sense) for mother and baby? Does the Dutch system of home births have lessons to teach us?

The maternity services are looked at from the consumer's point of view as an individual and some of the less easily measured hazards to good parenthood and normal infant development are shown. The importance of a good beginning in the relationship between mother and baby with the advantages of home delivery in this respect are well described and special note is taken of the needs of the unusually vulnerable mother.

All these articles demonstrate a strong bias towards resurrecting selective home obstetrics and there is little space given to argument from the other side, but the object of the book is to promote self-examination and rethinking which is always good. It is not as the preface points out, necessarily perverse to question whether minimum perinatal mortality figures should be reached *at any price*. And the price may sometimes be the individual's right of choice when the facts are known.

Since this book was written there has been a widespread change for the better in attitudes towards more liberal

regimens for mother and child in our obstetric units. But can these moves to bring the good things of home confinement into the hospital setting ever really be successfully achieved? It is doubtful, and if we fail to think again about the feasibility of restoring a policy of well selected home delivery now the machine will have taken over and it will be too late.

DAVID VULLIAMY

Techniques de Chirurgie Pédiatrique. Edited by D. Pellerin and P. Bertin. (Pp. 598; illustrated + tables. F.fr. 360, hardback.) Masson: Paris. 1978.

The editors have selected their 14 collaborators from leading departments of paediatric surgery in Paris, Lyon, Marseilles, Toulouse, and Rouen to produce this excellent book on soft tissue surgery in infancy and childhood. Operations on the brain and the heart, as distinct from the great vessels are excluded. The subject is divided in 13 well selected chapters. Each of these is astonishingly comprehensive, with a systematic presentation and uniformity of style in the brief and lucid text. There is a section devoted to the practical management of disturbances in physiology, and throughout there is an emphasis on fundamental features of surgical anatomy and operative technique. Despite this approach various alternative operative procedures are described in good detail. The clear print is on high quality paper and the illustrations, mainly line drawings, are generous and of superb quality. Indeed the illustrations alone make the book valuable to surgeons who are not scholars of French. Many of the references are to publications in English and the index is comprehensive.

J. F. R. BENTLEY

Shorter notices

Care of the Handicapped Child: a Festschrift for Ronald MacKeith. Clinics in Developmental Medicine No. 67. Edited by J. Apley. (Pp. 145; illustrated + tables. £6.00, hardback.) Spastics International Medical Publications: London. 1978.

Not a textbook but a collection of papers by 18 of the countless people who admired him, in honour of a great paediatric teacher, and one who did much for