Book reviews

Atlas of Neonatal Histopathology. By A. Moragas, A. Ballabriga, and M. T. Vidal; translated by A. and M. A. Valdes-Dapena. (Pp. 238; illustrated. £43.75, hardback.) Saunders: Philadelphia. 1977.

This book consists of 376 colour plates illustrating histological findings in neonatal deaths. The material presented is arranged according to organ system and each illustration is accompanied by a brief clinical description of the case and a discussion of the histological features. In some places the translators have added comments of their own. Most of the common conditions recognised in histology in the neonatal period are illustrated and a fair selection of rarities are included. The central nervous system is not very well covered: there are for instance no examples of ischaemic types of brain damage. The quality of the colour plates is variable and some are indistinct.

Despite the authors' preface stating the importance of correlating clinical and macroscopic pathological findings with histology, the production of an atlas of this type implies that neonatal pathological diagnosis is primarily dependent on histology. In fact the ability to make accurate macroscopic observations at post-mortem examination, to assess gestational age, the adequacy of growth, and those deviations from normal that call for further investigations, are far more important than knowing the characteristic histological features of particular conditions. There is only one opportunity to make the correct assessment macroscopically, but the slides will be available for as long as required. An atlas such as this cannot teach a general pathologist or paediatrician much about neonatal pathology. It represents purely a collection of histological pictures to compare with slides of one's own cases. As such it may prove of some limited value.

J. S. WIGGLESWORTH

Inherited Disorders of the Skeleton. Genetics in Medicine and Surgery Series. By Peter Beighton. (Pp. 267; illustrated + tables. £16.00 hardback.) Churchill Livingstone: Edinburgh. 1978.

This series of books is designed to provide doctors with easily accessible and authori-

tative information about the genetic aspects of their specialties. Professor Beighton has drawn his material from the 5-year period 1971-76 during which time he investigated more than 1000 patients with skeletal dysplasias and rare malformation syndromes in the genetic clinics of South Africa.

The generalised skeletal dysplasias are described, dividing them into those with and those without significant spinal involvement—an inevitable miscellaneous group—disorders with diminished and increased bone density, as well as the mucopolysaccharide disorders, mucopolysaccharidoses, and sphingolipidoses. Some of the rare craniofacial and vertebral malformation syndromes are included, as well as limb reduction defects and some digital anomalies. There are chapters on joint contracture syndromes and other connective tissue disorders such as the Marfan and Ehlers-Danlos syndromes, and a short final chapter on primary disturbances of growth such as pituitary and Russell-Silver dwarfism.

The title of the book is perhaps not quite accurate as mainly only rare and generalised disorders are included. The common skeletal defects are not mentioned, even though there may be a multifactorial or autosomal dominant pattern of inheritance (congenital dislocation of the hip, idiopathic talipes equino-varus and other foot deformities, tarsal coalition, neural tube defects, idiopathic scoliosis, spondylolysis). One of the best features is the list of references after each chapter; these are well chosen, up to date, and not oppressively plentiful.

It is assumed that the reader has a working knowledge of medical genetics and antenatal diagnosis, and Professor Beighton has concentrated on clinical and radiological features rather than on management and pathogenesis. The book is written from the standpoint of a clinical geneticist and paediatrician and it should prove a most helpful addition to their armamentarium.

RUTH WYNNE-DAVIES

Operative Surgery. Fundamental International Techniques: Paediatric Surgery. 3rd edition. Edited by H. Homewood

Nixon. (Pp. 489; illustrated. £42.00 hardback.) Butterworth: London. 1978.

The third edition of this series is the first to devote a volume to paediatric surgery. The editor has drawn on the expertise of 46 surgeons and the subtitle *Fundamental International Techniques* is fully justified. The surgery of childhood is comprehensively covered with chapters on herniae of all descriptions, congenital and acquired diseases of the alimentary tract, the liver and portal system, neoplasms, oesophageal and pulmonary surgery, endocrine surgery, and those aspects of neurosurgery, head and neck surgery, orthopaedics, and genitourinary surgery which the general surgeon may be called upon to deal with. The surgeon with a paediatric surgery commitment will find this book of value. Each chapter begins with a paragraph on the indications for the procedure and, in so doing, instructs the inexperienced in when as well as how to operate. The chapters on the commonly encountered surgical conditions of childhood are particularly well done. To the paediatric surgeon a volume of this type has two main uses. Firstly, as a source of information on an operation occasionally performed; by covering all aspects of paediatric surgery this requirement is fulfilled. Secondly, as a convenient source of references to the original operative description, but in this it fails and the failure is made more apparent because a few of the chapters are supplied with comprehensive references, setting a standard which only serves to highlight the deficiencies of other chapters. A book so dependent on illustrations is inevitably expensive. However, this should not deter general hospitals from regarding this volume as an important addition to the library.

VANESSA WRIGHT

Private Worlds of Dying Children. By Myra Bluebond-Langner. (Pp. 282. £8.00 hardback.) Princeton University Press: New Jersey. 1978.

This book is a very difficult one to review as the aims of the author are not clear to me. She is an anthropologist who spent 9 months in a unit treating children with

leukaemia, recording the reactions and responses of these children. One chapter takes the form of a play, the characters being the children, their parents and the hospital personnel, and seeks to illustrate the way the children learn about their disease process and how they cope with the knowledge that they are going to die. There is a detailed analysis of the phases through which the children pass. Dr Langner shows that in her study even children as young as 3 years know they are dying and maintain, with parents and hospital personnel, a mutual pretence. In this book no child survived which poses the question as to when the study was carried out. There is little doubt that during recent years a greater understanding of children's awareness of the seriousness of their illness and also the justifiably greater optimism regarding prognosis have combined to develop a much freer discussion of possible death in paediatric oncology units. This book is related to American culture and perhaps succeeds in highlighting the differences between it and the average attitudes of parents in Great Britain, and indicates that it is harder to die young in that society because of the greater need to succeed. The author emphasises the difficulties experienced by parents and doctors in acknowledging the inevitable death of a child—the parents because their role as 'rearers' can no longer be sustained and doctors because it indicates failure. She does not, however, seem to suggest that these are natural responses.

If Dr Langner's hope is to help all concerned to deal with death in childhood, I think she succeeds only in part when she details in her conclusions that the children will control the situation and will 'play the game'. She does not state that death in childhood is a rare occurrence in any society in the western world today and that whatever our role in that society we need help in progressing through the event. This book makes interesting reading and certainly helped me to polarise my ideas and make me more

aware of other people's difficulties in understanding how some of us have more problems than others in coping with death.

PAT MORRIS JONES

Textbook of Paediatrics. 2nd edition. Edited by J. O. Forfar and G. C. Arneil. (Available in one or two volumes. Single volume: Pp. 822; illustrated+tables. £50.00. Two volumes: Pp. 952; illustrated+tables. £60.00.) Churchill Livingstone: Edinburgh. 1978.

The first edition of Forfar and Arneil was widely and justifiably acclaimed as a major achievement for British paediatrics, providing a large comprehensive textbook of paediatrics comparable in coverage and quality with its American counterparts. It was fully reviewed in *Archives* (49, 504, 1974). It must be unusual for a book whose first edition was so generally praised to undergo so many changes in content and layout in its second edition. The first impression is that it is a completely different book. The page size is substantially larger, and although the number of pages is somewhat reduced, overall it is definitely bigger. The book has been completely reset with smaller type but often with clearer headings and more generous spacing, so it is probably easier to find one's way around quickly.

The editors and contributors have certainly been as busy as the publishers in revising and adding to the first edition. The most obvious changes are the addition of chapters on paediatric oncology and gynaecology, and of a very detailed table of drug doses and indications—all welcome and useful. However it is really necessary to compare the two editions side by side to realise the extent to which the old chapters have been updated or added to. Not surprisingly the chapter on prenatal paediatrics contains much more, but even the accounts of subjects in which there have not been major advances contain good new material. An example is the discussion of

the orthopaedic aspects of cerebral palsy. There are many new tables and many of the old ones have been expanded, so they now contain a great wealth of information (although sometimes in uncomfortably small print). Once again I was impressed by the depth and scholarship of many of the chapters.

Our reviewer's only important criticism of the first edition concerned the quality of reproduction of the photographs. It is no better in the new edition, and in places the illustrations give a slightly drab and old-fashioned look to this very up-to-date textbook. In the first edition the x-rays were in a separate section on glossy paper at the end, which our previous reviewer thought sensible, but which seemed to me a rather artificial and makeshift arrangement. In this edition they are placed in the text where they belong. They do not appear to have lost much clarity, but the reproduction is certainly not as good as it ought to be, and this applies particularly to some of the chest x-rays, and the CT scans. Perhaps the publishers can find a better way to cope with this admittedly difficult problem next time. The line drawings are excellent.

Renewed congratulations to John Forfar, Gavin Arneil, and their team of contributors for this splendid achievement, and thanks for the immense labour they have undertaken in both editions.

R. J. ROBINSON

Shorter notice

Neonatal Medicine. By M. L. Chiswick. (Pp. 101; illustrated+tables. £6.20 by post, or £5.50 to personal callers, hardback.) Update: London. 1978.

There are fewer than 100 pages of text, notably succinct, but more than 100 highly apt illustrations, nearly all of them in colour, to give this latest addition to the considerable flow of recent books on neonatal medicine an agreeably individual flavour.