Book reviews

Neurological Development in the Full-Term and Premature Neonate. By S. Sainte-Anne Dargassies. (Pp. 323; illustrated + tables. US\$68.95.) Excerpta Medica: Amsterdam, London, New York. 1977.

The Neurological Examination of the Full-Term Newborn Infant. 2nd edition. By Heinz F. R. Prechtl. Clinics in Developmental Medicine No. 63. (Pp. 68; illustrated. £4.25.) Heinemann: London; Lippincott: Philadelphia. 1977.

For more than a quarter of a century S. Sainte-Anne Dargassies has been studying the neurological development of the newborn infant. Now the up-to-date results of her observations and experience have been made available in English, following the translation by Humbert Smith of the original 1974 edition in French. The book is divided into three sections. The first two deal successively with the neurophysiological development of term and preterm infants, while the third is devoted to the neurological assessment of gestational age. The techniques of observation and analysis are described in detail. No one reading this book can fail to appreciate the meticulous care and patience on which the work is founded, or fail to have their observational horizons widened with respect to clinical examination of the newborn. Medical libraries and neuropaediatricians will undoubtedly wish to purchase this book.

However, most practising clinicians concerned with the newborn would be well advised first to purchase and read the 2nd edition of Heinz Prechtl's *Neurological Examination of the Full-Term Newborn Infant*, which has also just been published. This primer in the art of baby watching is only 68 pages long, but most admirably and precisely describes and illustrates all the techniques needed for making a

detailed assessment of central nervous system function at birth. The importance of this subject cannot be over-emphasised. As Dr Ronald Mac Keith has written in the preface: 'The history tells of the risk, but only the neurological examination can tell the state of the brain's functioning...', and hence give us insights into aetiology, prognosis, and ultimately, we hope, prevention of cerebral disorders arising in the perinatal period.

P. M. DUNN

Child Abuse and Neglect Case Studies. By Abe R. Fosson and Otto Kaak. (Pp. 196; illustrated; paperback £7.50.) Kimpton: London. 1977.

'The self-perpetuating cycle of child abuse and neglect must be broken—let's do it this generation.' This sentence from the authors' preface will give an impression of the flavour of the book with its authors' enthusiastic approach and touch of proselytising zeal. 50 actual cases are analysed; they bring out vividly the complex and often bizarre circumstances in so many stories of child abuse. Although the scene is American (the authors work in Kentucky), the picture emerging differs little from that to be found in Hackney, Merseyside, or Glasgow. Abused children everywhere are apt to fall tragically between the provisions of the medical and the local social services, and to present repetitive kinds of dilemmas; for instance, if, when, or how the police and the law should be invoked. Authenticity of the case histories here related is enhanced by the fact that as happens in practice, many end with no clear cut and tidy final conclusion as to what precisely *did* happen, so that action has perforce to be based on the reasonable guess rather than taken with the comfort of certainty.

The reader's interest is maintained by the novel device of interpolating in the case histories numerous quizzes, the reader being invited to choose from a series of possible interpretations or actions. In this way he can test his own ability correctly to handle cases where child abuse is suspected. I was thereby proved manifestly shaky on the technical procedures appropriate in cases of alleged rape or of incest, but was also provoked to disagree warmly with some of the authors' other choices (Fig. 2.2 for instance surely shows flagrant rickets not, as stated, osteomalacia).

Child abuse, in the widest sense, seems to be occupying an increasingly large proportion of the paediatrician's time. Most of us are acutely aware of our lack of training in this difficult, inevitably disagreeable, yet important field. The authors' provision of a useful means of educating ourselves is to be thoroughly welcomed.

DOUGLAS GAIRDNER

Shorter notices

Progress in Medical Virology. Edited by Joseph L. Melnick. (Pp. viii + 212; illustrated + tables. US\$44.00.) Karger: Basel. 1977.

This volume contains several chapters of relevance to paediatricians: the Eradication of Smallpox; Congenital CMV Disease—Is Prevention Possible? Viral Vaccines.

Pediatric Radiology. Case Studies. By Howard A. Wexler and Catherine A. Poole. (Pp. 377; illustrated. £11.25.) Kimpton: London. 1977.

One of a useful series of do-it-yourself educators, but the standard of reproduction of the x-rays hardly seems adequate.