Book reviews


After many teething difficulties, paediatric clinical pharmacology has come of age and a rapidly expanding data base resulting from excellent paediatric studies bears testimony to this fact. This book, based on a conference proceedings, and consisting of papers contributed by many of the foremost authorities on paediatric pharmacology, aims to identify the origins and nature of the available information, and to present it in such a way as to facilitate a rational approach to paediatric therapeutics.

It looks at five major areas of knowledge and concern. A discussion of factors modulating drug action in immature organisms provides an introduction to the second part which describes pharmacokinetic principles and their application to drug use, with particular reference to anticonvulsants and digoxin. The third section thoughtfully explores drug therapy in malignancy and virus diseases, and the more topical subjects of drug effects on lung maturation and the patent ductus arteriosus. Other problems of pre- and early postnatal drug therapy, the emotional disorders, and pharmacology of antihypertensive agents are clearly reviewed in the fourth part, and an excellent discussion on the general ethical principles governing drug research and investigation in children is included in the final section, which is mainly concerned with drug regulations more applicable to the USA.

The book, which makes no claim to being a comprehensive handbook of paediatric pharmacology, is a good one, and because of its nature, cannot be criticised for omissions. Its aims have been clearly achieved and there are no noticeable errors or unjustified statements. Readers looking for information on the treatment of specific paediatric problems will be disappointed, although they will not fail to recognise the principles on which a paediatric pharmacological approach is based and which are so firmly adhered to by the contributors. The paper on anticonvulsants by Morselli and Baruzzi particularly emphasises these principles by its numerous omissions of pharmacokinetic parameter values for adults, the drugs and age groups considered. Not for these authors the substitution of adult values for those of children, but rather an earnest plea for more data.

Paediatricians, who believe that 'children are not small adults' maxim extends to drug use, will find much to interest them in this book.

GEORGE RYLANCE


This book covers clinical, genetic, molecular, and therapeutic aspects of the great majority of metabolic disease in childhood. It is divided into three sections. The first deals with general topics—such as incidences, screening, genetic principles, and basic enzymology. The second section deals with symptomatology and common metabolic problems in paediatric practice. In the third and largest section, metabolic disorders are considered systematically and classified under the headings of disorders of active transport, disorders characterised by excessive storage or accumulation, disorders of intermediary metabolism, and disorders of synthesis. This logical classification of inborn errors of metabolism will help newcomers to the field in understanding the numerous and diverse consequences of disordered phenotypic expression of genetic enzyme defects. Further ramifications of the proposed reclassification are generally equally logical. However, the advantages of classifying Niemann-Pick disease and metachromatic leucodystrophy as examples of globosidosis (rather than of sphingolipidosis) are not evident, since the metabolic block in these disorders is in the removal of residues (phosphorylcholine, sulphate) which are not present in globoside. A number of slips (for example, induridoniase, B-mannosidase, Tay-Sachs gene in 1 in 1000 Ashkenazis) require correction in the next edition.

The easily readable, comprehensive descriptions of these complicated and often extremely rare disorders will be of great value to clinicians, biochemists, and others involved in the care of children with metabolic disorders.

P. F. BENSON


This soft-backed book provides a synopsis of the current state of the practice of paediatric cancer chemotherapy. The author, who is Director of the Pediatric Hematology and Oncology Service in the University of Nebraska College of Medicine, points out that because of continuing development in the field it is impossible to cover all aspects of drug therapy in malignant disease, and that treatment programmes for one tumour may vary from one centre to another. His aim is to provide a framework of information to enable clinicians in the field to understand the basis for the treatments. The first two chapters cover the clinical pharmacology of the anti-cancer drugs and the principles of cellular kinetics and chemotherapeutic strategy. The next 10 chapters cover the chemotherapy of the major paediatric malignancies, and the final one the late effects of cancer chemotherapy. The chapters dealing with specific disorders are sub-divided into sections setting out the background development, discussion of different established regimens, and the treatment of recurrent disease.

This book suffers from the rather artificial division of chemotherapy from other modalities of management and could not be used to plan a whole treatment programme. In general, however, it provides an excellent reference to modern paediatric cancer chemotherapy in an easily readable and transportable form. It has an extensive bibliography, although references more recent than 1976 are rare.

P. H. MORRIS JOBS