Book reviews


This monograph comprises a series of papers about the risk factors for atherosclerosis. This is a popular subject at the present time and it certainly is useful to have an up-to-date statement of the art. I do not think that the book contains anything very startling or new, but it is a good starting point for anybody who wishes to get into the field.

There is first a generally rather optimistic overview, which is summed up in the Foreword, where the first sentence concludes: ‘... the best available data suggest that if 11 known risk factors were controlled in adults, only 50% of the cases might be prevented’ (my italics).

One of the most intriguing facets of atherosclerosis concerns its geographical pathology and the chapters from Newman and Strong and from Hames and colleagues in Georgia concentrate on this. Henry Neufeldt contributes some more of his intriguing arterial pictures, which have much to do with the genetic and environmental determinants of atherosclerosis. Lipids, lipoproteins, hypertension, smoking, nutrition, and exercise are considered in some detail.

I found the most interesting chapter to be the one about atherosclerosis prevention in Arizona. Nobody knows whether such programmes will actually reduce the incidence of it, but as Henry McGill is reported to have said: ‘Nobody has ever shown that high cholesterol levels, high blood pressure, or smoking is good for your health, nor has anyone demonstrated the benefits of obesity or sedentary living habits’.

I am glad to have this book and I hope that it will be available in the larger libraries. I think academic departments of paediatrics ought to possess it, but I would not advise every paediatrician to go out and buy his own copy.

C. G. D. BROOK.


Although this book is entitled Atlas of Abdominal Ultrasonography in Children, it is much more than that. It is a summary of differential diagnosis and of the most appropriate and rewarding investigations that should be performed in abdominal disorders, with the emphasis on radioisotope and ultrasonic scanning.

The author is Associate Clinical Professor of Radiology and Director of the Department of Nuclear Medicine and Ultrasound in the Children’s Hospital in Los Angeles, so it is easy to see why he has approached the subject of ultrasonography from this, the ideal point of view.

There are chapters on the liver and spleen, biliary system (including the pancreas), midabdomen, pelvis, and kidneys. The introduction gives the essential points that should be looked for by the referring clinician on the indications for ultrasonic scanning and the limitations of it, and there is useful and practical advice for those starting an ultrasonic scanning programme. The complementary nature of ultrasonic scanning to diagnostic radiology and radioisotope imaging is emphasised, and its noninvasive nature stressed, explaining its ready acceptance by most children. Much of the book is devoted to illustrations which are mainly of good quality, although the text is interesting and readable.

At £16.50 the book is a good buy for departments of diagnostic imaging. It can be recommended to all those who scan paediatric patients, to the referring clinicians, and those who are about to sit an examination in diagnostic imaging or who wish to bring themselves up to date with recent advances in this field.

BARBARA C. KING.


The authors have addressed themselves to one aspect of clinical immunology that is currently exciting interest and consuming a good deal of effort in research and clinical immunology. They draw attention to the fact that perhaps a hundred million children suffer from kwashiorkor and that minor forms of nutritional deficiency must therefore be very much more common. It has been widely believed that malnutrition is associated with an increased hazard of infection, and so a scientific text examining this possibility more fully must be widely welcomed. Their book, which fills 233 pages including bibliography, is divided into 9 chapters. At the beginning a careful, detailed, and up-to-date account is given of the immunological resources of the developing human organism. There follows a full and helpful chapter concerned with the assessment of nutritional status including nutritional aspects of fetal life. The middle section of the book deals with the interactions between infection and immune responses, and the metabolic effects of infections. This section is detailed and is linked, as other sections are, to a full and up-to-date bibliography. Towards the end there is a section dealing with those topics in a comparative manner referring to research in nonhuman species, and finally, there are useful sections on the wider biological implications of infection, nutrition, and immunity, together with a comment on further research needs.

The book is well illustrated and contains a number of useful factual tables. It would perhaps have been helpful to have a numbered list of headings with the title of each chapter since each paragraph is carefully numbered. With this minor criticism the book can nevertheless be strongly recommended to clinical researchers and those who are interested in related subjects of immunology and nutrition. The book provides a very good framework and is not too expensive for purchase or too lengthy to read. It is to be hoped that the authors will be prepared to maintain the book through a number of editions for although it is now fully up to date one can imagine that in this expanding subject revision will be necessary within 3 or 4 years. This shows the value of the book rather than affords a criticism.

C. B. S. WOOD.


This book is an account of the proceedings
of the Second European Symposium sponsored by the British Heart Foundation and organised by the editors. The purpose of the symposium was to concentrate on some of the more important growing aspects of the diagnosis and management of congenital heart disease, and contributors from America and Europe were chosen for their special experience in the subjects covered. These of necessity tend to be rather restricted, so that the book in no way represents a comprehensive account of modern paediatric cardiological practice as its title might suggest.

As with all international symposia, the standard of contributions is variable. There is an excellent account of the new terminology in congenital heart disease and its relevance to the precise diagnosis of complex lesions, using the method of sequential chamber localisation which the editors themselves have done so much to promote during the last few years. Likewise, the sections on ventricular septal defect, Fallot's tetralogy, and atrioventricular canal defects, contain interesting material which is well presented. In particular, Rudolph's introductory review of ventricular septal defect in infancy is a small masterpiece of clarity and concise organisation of essential information. However, in other parts of the book, especially where the subject matter is more abstruse, both text and format tend to suffer from an unfortunate degree of repetitiveness. The free discussion that follows each major section, and which is generally of a high standard, enhances the interest and understanding of each subject.

Because of its specialised and selective content, this book cannot be recommended as a work of reference for undergraduates or noncardiological postgraduates. Nor will it be of value to general paediatricians. However, for those engaged in the challenging and fascinating task of diagnosing and treating infants with complex congenital cardiac defects it will provide a fund of valuable and up-to-date information.

T. A. H. ENGLISH


It might seem a difficult task to review an experimental study the results of which so closely accord with the reviewer's own clinical experience and views. Nevertheless it can be said without reservation that this supplement deserves the close attention of all those who are concerned with the clinical care of children with urinary infection or vesico-ureteric reflux (VUR), and with the prevention of renal scarring and its possible consequences.

The association of VUR, renal scarring, and urinary infection has been recognised for some time, but the mechanisms have been less clear and there remain a number of unexplained clinical anomalies—such as the child with VUR who has recurrent urinary infection but persistently normal kidneys. Hodson's pioneering experimental studies had confirmed that when VUR was induced in pigs, the development of renal scarring was confined to those areas of the kidney where intrarenal reflux (IRR) had been visualised. In their book Ransley and Risdon set out to investigate the relative importance of urodynamic factors, infection, and the morphology of the renal papillae in the development of such scars. The result was a carefully planned and controlled series of experiments presented clearly and readably and assisted with admirable diagrammatic, radiological, and histological pathological illustration. The reasons for the choice of the experimental animal (piglet), and the precise techniques used, are also discussed succinctly.

The basic findings are summarised as follows: 'Segmental chronic pyelonephritic scarring in the young pig depends upon vesico-ureteric reflux of infected urine. Individual scars are formed at the sites of intrarenal reflux and this in turn is determined by the form of the renal papilla, some allowing intrarenal reflux and some preventing it.'

The morphology of the pig's kidney resembles that of the human in many respects and there is a close similarity between the induced and the naturally occurring renal scar. If the analogous situation is to be pursued, then the implications of this study must include reappraisal of the need for ureteric reimplantation and its timing, and an emphasis on the importance of urinary infection, its early diagnosis, and adequate treatment.

Paediatricians, urologists, radiologists, and pathologists, will all enjoy reading this book. So too will those who are excited by observing the emergence of convincing answers from a carefully planned study.

JEAN M. SMELLIE