Book reviews


This book gives a description of the language programme being developed for handicapped children at the Nottingham Development Research Unit. The programme is designed for use by parents, teachers, psychologists, etc., particularly at that stage in the child's language development when he is just beginning to understand language but is using no speech or only a few words. It is therefore not suitable for children at a prelanguage stage of development or for those with rather more advanced language skills. The methods of teaching are described in great detail with many illustrations; the vocabulary taught is based on those words which occur most commonly in the developing language of normal children and also in some children with Down's syndrome. The mentally handicapped child is therefore being taught a developmental vocabulary list in a structured way using a variety of play techniques, all very clearly illustrated. I found this book interesting and useful and it should interest all those who teach language to young mentally handicapped children. However, the book does state that a thorough assessment before starting such a language programme is essential, not only to judge the level of the child's existing language development but to look for other handicaps particularly visual and hearing ones. I therefore feel that such a programme should be conducted under the guidance of someone who is an expert in assessing all aspects of the handicapped child and I think that parents would find it difficult to use the book without help and guidance. In comparison with other language training programmes for the more severely handicapped, this one has advantages in the care with which the language has been chosen and also in the methods in which it is taught. One disadvantage is that other aspects of development and behaviour are not covered by this programme as they are, for example, in the Portage Programme.


Hard on the heels of Alex Mowat's excellent book Liver disorders in childhood, this new volume appeared on my desk. In the publisher's prose, it is 'written by an international group of 24 highly respected authorities' and it 'comprehensively covers normal hepatobiliary structure, function, and disease'. The contributors are from Canada, India, Nigeria, the UK, and the USA. The chapters do not overlap although their titles and order are at first rather confusing. Thus, the introductory chapters on normal structure and hepatic function are followed by a brief account of liver blood supply, a description of symptoms and signs of hepatobiliary disease, a succinct review of jaundice, an erudite guide to evaluation of hepatic function, and a brief but lucid introduction to the pathological morphology of the liver. A good deal of liver disease has already been dealt with en passant by this stage, which is nearly halfway through the book. The succeeding chapters deal with specific entities: acute viral liver injury, fulminant liver failure, chronic liver disease, metabolic liver disease, hepatic metabolism of drugs and drug-induced liver injury (did you know that ampicillin may cause the AST to be raised or that fatal liver damage can follow barium enemas?), infections and infestations, nutritional liver disease, immunology of liver disease, portal hypertension, surgery of the liver, gall bladder and bile ducts, and a final chapter on miscellaneous disorders. It would be invidious to single out specific chapters, although clearly each varies somewhat in usefulness as a clinical guide or source of reference. I have found the book helpful in clarifying the present state of knowledge about complicated subjects, such as the various hepatitis B particles and antibodies, and the significance of α-1 antitrypsin phenotypes. It is up to date, with references as recent as 1979: a tribute to editor and publisher alike. Faced with the difficult choice between this book and Mowat's I thank the editors of the Archives for kindly sending me a copy of each! For those less fortunate who must purchase his own (reasonably priced for the quality of material and presentation), I can only say that you will not go wrong with either.

J A DODGE


Paediatric dermatology is emerging as a specialty in some countries as an independent specialty, and although the desirability of such a development may be questioned, it must be admitted that skin diseases in children may present special problems in diagnosis and management. In his preface to this latest volume in Heinemann's Modern Topics series, the editor tells us that he asked his contributors to help him produce a book 'of practical use with wide appeal containing something of interest to paediatricians, family practitioners, school medical officers, as well as dermatologists'. It is difficult to write on a specialised subject in such a manner as to inform and interest individuals who differ so widely in their training, knowledge, and experience. It is possible to do so if the field to be covered is not too extensive so that the recent literature can be selectively and critically reviewed and interpreted. Notably successful chapters in the book are 'The child and light' by Frain-Bell, 'Blistering disorders' by Bleehen and Harrington, 'Skin disorders in immunodeficiency' by Webster and Wood, and 'Steroids and growth' by Harris. However, when an author is asked to cover too large a subject in a very limited space he has only