

Book reviews

Pediatric Diseases Related to Calcium. Editors-in-chief H F De Luca and C S Anast. (Pp. 449; illustrated + tables. £22.50 hardback.) Blackwell: Oxford. 1980.

During the last decade there has been renewed interest in childhood mineral metabolism. This has been stimulated by new work on vitamin D and its metabolites, and by improved techniques for the assay of the hormones concerned in calcium homeostasis. It is timely that the subject be reviewed and the numerous recent reports collated into a single volume.

This book had its origin in a symposium held in honour of Harold and Helen Harrison who were pioneers in the field. There is an impressive list of 76 contributors who review and discuss their subjects, although it is salutary that 69 of them are from North America, 4 from Switzerland, and only 1 each from France, Japan, and the UK. It is immodestly presented as 'the only compilation of information in the field of paediatric diseases related to calcium and phosphorus metabolism in existence'. In fact it is, with few exceptions, a series of reviews and papers on aspects of vitamin D and calcium metabolism, with heavy emphasis on events at the molecular and membrane transport levels. As such it will prove a valuable reference source and contains much to stimulate the investigator. The clinical aspects are dealt with extensively, and while it is impracticable to list all of the contributions, areas of particular interest to the practising paediatrician are: neonatal hypocalcaemia and the problem of bone mineralisation in low birthweight infants; rickets and the diseases with which it may be confused; vitamin D metabolism in chronic hepatic failure; and the paediatric pharmacology of vitamin D metabolites. One somewhat anomalous section is on mineral deficiency in growth which, although fascinating reading, is largely concerned with zinc. There is much excellent material which is well presented but, nevertheless, the reader is left with the impression that the gestational period of this book may have been somewhat prolonged. There are few references to work published during the

last three years even though this period has seen no diminution of research activity, and recent work on the likely biological role of $24,25(\text{OH})_2\text{D}_3$ seems to have attracted less attention than it deserves. However, these small criticisms will not greatly diminish the value of a most comprehensive and valuable addition to the literature.

DONALD BARLTROP

Community Paediatrics. A Primer in Child Care. By E D May. (Pp. 186; illustrated + tables. £7.95 hardback.) MTP Press: Lancaster. 1980.

A book with this title is likely to catch the eye of doctors and nurses who are interested in child health, for although many assert that their practice embraces all features relating to the health, growth, and development of children they freely acknowledge that there are gaps in the basic information on preventive, social, and educational paediatrics.

Elsie May, a community physician with special responsibility for the provision of services for children, has tried to cover those particular aspects of the care of children that normally receive little attention. She divides her topic into six chapters dealing with selected age-related issues and two supporting sections, one with the omnibus title 'Who am I?', and the other devoted to teaching on the child care services. The appendices, which constitute about one-seventh of the book, provide further details on hearing tests, sequential developmental questionnaires, and immunisation data. In many respects the presentation, style, and choice of content resemble lecture notes instead of a primer on child care, but the value lies in the wisdom of the author, acquired through many years of working in the community child health services.

It is impossible to commend this book unreservedly for the intended readership (family doctors, clinical medical officers, health visitors, and school nurses) and it would be a doubtful guide to 'parents keenly interested in the development of their children' because, on the one hand, it is not sufficiently detailed to advance the knowledge of professionals, and on the other, parents could be justified in thinking

that the technical terminology renders the book frustrating to the lay reader. This does illustrate the difficulties of catering for a complete spectrum of interest.

ROSEMARY GRAHAM

A Guide to Paediatric Anaesthesia. By J M Beasley and S E F Jones. (Pp. 167; illustrated + tables. £5.80 paperback.) Blackwell: Oxford. 1980.

The authors are consultant anaesthetists at Birmingham Children's Hospital and they intend this small book to be a guide, rather than a compendium or an academic work, on anaesthetics for children. Junior anaesthetists invariably encounter children requiring anaesthesia fairly early in their careers—normally for ear, nose, and throat surgery—but they may not see more-specialised procedures, such as neonatal surgery, until much later if at all.

The book is readable and useful, and it covers all the common problems and situations. It could be read with advantage by anyone who is not already primarily involved in anaesthesia for children. The authors have done the specialty a positive service by giving clear and sound advice on the management of many common problems, thus removing a lot of the mystique which surrounds paediatric anaesthesia. There is some unnecessary repetition which is not entirely unwelcome because it is consistent, except for the conflicting advice given in two chapters about the need for an intravenous infusion during surgery for meningomyelocele.

The authors are right to advise against the use of the Macintosh infant laryngoscope blade for small children, but they should have mentioned that Professor Sir Robert Macintosh did not design, or approve of, the infant blade; it was added by the manufacturing firm after the successful introduction of the Macintosh 'adult' and 'large adult' blades. Although many varieties of infant laryngoscope blade are mentioned, the excellent blade designed by Seward is not described.

This is a welcome elementary introduction to paediatric anaesthesia, and the only serious criticism is the poor binding of the book sent for review.

A P ADAMS