Book reviews


This book provides a record of an international symposium on neonatal cardiology held in Edinburgh. Each speaker was an expert on his particular subject, and as much time was allowed for discussion as for each paper. The book has been well edited and the discussion highlights the problems and suggests possible ways of resolving them. It is essential reading for all paediatric cardiologists and cardiac surgeons, and it contains a great deal that will interest neonatal paediatricians—in particular the chapters on persistent fetal circulation, the ductus arteriosus and its pharmacological manipulation, conduction disturbances and arrhythmias, and the use and dangers of digoxin. Also, the management of transposition of the great arteries, coarctation of the aorta, and total anomalous pulmonary venous drainage are important reading for the neonatologist, as earlier diagnosis and referral has been an important factor in the improved results in these lesions. There is a good chapter on the increasing value of echo-cardiography in this age group. There are many good diagrams and electrocardiograms and only a few of the angiocardio-grams have not reproduced well, and there is a good selection of recent references. This book is highly recommended to neonatal paediatricians and paediatricians in training, as well as to paediatric cardiologists.

Olive Scott


Paediatric intensive care is one of the newest subspecialties of paediatrics and one that is rapidly expanding. The stated purpose of this book is to answer questions of house and nursing staff. It is intended to be comprehensive, except for major trauma and burns. It is divided into three parts: system failure, common problems, and equipment and techniques. Physiology and monitoring management are emphasised. Each part contains a large number of small chapters, a few pages long. For example, system failures contain such subjects as cerebral death, respiratory failure, and temperature regulation; specific problems include such titles as persistent pulmonary hypertension of the newborn, sepsis, and necrotising enterocolitis. Inevitably there is some overlap, but this has skillfully been kept to a minimum and does not make tedious reading.

In a practical manual such as this a good index is vital; this aspect was disappointing. For example potassium abnormalities must be a common finding in an intensive care unit, but the index contains only 2 references 'Potassium in Reye's syndrome' and 'Potassium permanganate'; there is not even a cross reference to hyperkalaemia.

This book achieves its aim remarkably well. I think that it would be used extensively by residents, registrars, and nursing staff working in areas where sick children are nursed. In this country, except for the intensive care facilities attached to special care baby units (and even here there is marked inadequacy), there is a dearth of paediatric intensive care units of the type referred to in this book. Nevertheless, it should also find a place in adult units where children are also nursed, and help those staff to give optimum care.

In intensive care practice there are bound to be disagreements on actual methods of management. However, although in many paediatric units the basic approach for fluid management is by weight only, some units, especially cardiothoracic ones, use body surface area. I think, therefore, that there should be a mention of the relationship somewhere in the text. There is tacit recognition of this as a table, giving recommended figures for maintenance of fluid, divides the patients into three weight groups, up to 10 kg, 11 to 20 kg, and over 20 kg with different fluid regimens for each weight group.

I would recommend this useful book which at current day values is realistically priced.

Michael Joseph

Shorter notice


This is a pocket-sized book which deserves to find a place in the office or on the bookshelf of every child's ward, outpatient clinic, and pathology department. It contains brief details of about 109 chemical pathology tests, and includes up-to-date 'normal' standards for age. For each investigation the method is briefly described and the established ranges are given, together with an explanatory note and reference for further detail.