

Book reviews

Language Development and Assessment. Studies in Developmental Paediatrics. Vol. 1. By Joan Reynell (Series Editor Margaret Pollak). (Pp. 176; illustrated + tables. £7.95 hardback.) MTP Press: Lancaster. 1980.

Every doctor who sees children with speech and language problems knows the name of Joan Reynell, and all doctors will have heard of the Reynell Developmental Language Tests since they are almost universally used for quantifying the level of language development in young children with such problems. The author states her aim clearly, which is to help the clinician (presumably paediatrician or clinical medical officer) to understand normal language development and to know which children will need help.

The book is divided into five main sections, the first of which takes the reader through the normal processes of language development and examines the possible causes of delay or deviation. It is clear and concise although considerably compressed. Joan Reynell avoids the prolixity of much psycho-linguistic literature, but she is dealing with difficult and complex ideas and the reader should not hurry over this part.

The second section deals with the clinical assessment of language. It is not intended that the paediatrician should do his own Reynell language testing, but these chapters contain much practical detail; the chapter 'Assessment of difficult children' is a masterpiece.

The third section consists of a brief chapter on when to refer a child for ongoing help, presumably from a speech therapist. The author's experience makes her cautious about laying down simple rules, and although she tries hard to do this the message in this chapter is somewhat muffled. 'Any child over the age of two and a half years, showing a significant delay in . . . language development should be referred for further help' is a question-begging statement, and the next paragraph shows that the author is uncomfortably aware of this.

The fourth section describes clinical case studies on a deaf child, a blind child, one who is mentally retarded, and one with a developmental language disorder.

The fifth section is a final chapter on 'Remedial measures', and in some respects this is the most important part of all. Joan Reynell's best known work is about the measurement of children's language, but possibly an even more important contribution has been to demonstrate that language intervention programmes measurably accelerate language development in children with problems.

This is a brief, very readable book by an expert who writes well, but the second edition would be improved by the inclusion of more numerical data on the normal variations in language development, and by a little more explanation of some of the flow diagrams.

R J ROBINSON

A Neurophysiological Basis for the Treatment of Cerebral Palsy. Clinics in Developmental Medicine No 75. Second edition. By K Bobath. (Pp. 98; illustrated + tables. £6.50 hardback.) Spastics International Medical Publications: London. 1980.

This is an instructive, easily read account of muscle tone, postural reflex control, co-ordination, and locomotion in normal and cerebral palsied infants and young children. The scope of the book is indicated by the chapter contents—normal postural reflex mechanisms, aspects of motor control, and application of normal development to assessment of cerebral palsy. Two chapters deal with abnormalities of tone, posture, and reflex behaviour in cerebral palsy; only then is the classification of cerebral palsy and its early recognition and treatment described. The comprehensive approach is shown by the reminder that vision, hearing, language, and social and emotional development need consideration: there are also paragraphs on the personality traits in spastics, athetoids, and ataxics. The section on early

diagnosis recognises the problems of delayed evolution of pathological signs and delayed development in hypotonic, but otherwise normal, infants.

The final 11-page chapter deals with the neurophysiological means by which a therapist might influence the motor system.

This is sure to be as popular as the first edition, and it will be valuable to all who try to help the cerebral palsied: doctors will find it useful in bridging the gap between the neurologist's observations of motor disorders and the physiotherapist's practical posture and movement oriented method of assessment and description of motor behaviour. Dr Bobath is to be congratulated for this revision of a very useful book.

PETER ROBSON

Shorter notice

Helping Clumsy Children. Edited by N Gordon and I McKinlay. (Pp. 195; illustrated. £5.95 paperback.) Churchill Livingstone: Edinburgh. 1980.

This is a wise, practical, and readable book on a subject that remains intractably diffuse. The emphasis is on 'doing something', and more specifically on 'what should we do now?' There are 11 contributors from predictable disciplines—including psychiatry and remedial teaching, diagnosis, incidence, and aetiology—and associated factors are well discussed. Most intervention is described in relation to children of school age and the predicament is admirably represented, but although failure as an additional handicap is stressed throughout, no new guide is offered on the assessment and management of the preschool child. This book deserves to be widely read by anyone concerned with helping a child who, though without gross neurological handicap, cannot measure up to either his own or other people's expectations.