Book reviews


The first edition of this book was published in 1965. In this edition there are 22 contributors, most of whom come from Chicago, where Howard Traisman works, and 12 of the 30 chapters were written by Traisman himself. He is obviously a very nice man who genuinely cares deeply about his patients, but his view of what the average family can understand and carry out is certainly different from the average British view; evidently in the USA diabetes is managed in a very different way. For example, it is clear from the three chapters on nutrition that eating in the USA is a far more serious business than it is here. The actual dietary regimen is extremely complicated, including the prescription of carbohydrates and calories, taking account of the theoretical glucose availability from the metabolism of proteins and fats. The average diet seems to obtain 36% of its calories from carbohydrates and 42% from fats. However, there is a lighter side to food as shown in a table of "special occasion foods" for eating at "fast food places" including MacDonald’s, Big Mac, Burger Kings, Whopper and Whopper Junior, and Kentucky Fried Chicken, extra crispy!

I received a cultural shock in the section entitled ‘Emergency medical care’ which begins ‘Living in this nuclear age can pose serious problems for the diabetic in case of a national disaster!’ I am not saying that keeping a 2-month supply of essentials for all diabetics in the air raid shelter is not a good idea—it is just different from the order of priorities that I would normally set for families with this problem.

There are some very good chapters; that on the aetiology of insulin-deficient diabetes deals clearly and concisely with the interaction of HLA tissue type and autoimmunity in the aetiology of diabetes, and the section on dental care in the diabetic child is sensitive and convincing in its outlook on the specific preventive care of teeth for diabetic children. Perhaps the best one is that by Rubenstein and Binder ‘Beta cell function’, which stresses the importance of residual insulin secretion in the early clinical course of the disease and I would recommend it as worthwhile reading to any member of a clinical team caring for children with diabetes.

This long book is not a handbook for practitioners; although it is detailed in parts, other important practical sections are vague and theoretical. Its main asset is that it illustrates the need for involving the services of many disciplines in the care of children with diabetes. Each chapter is extensively referenced and I found no typographical errors. However, I do not think it offers much to the British physician or nurse.

J D BAUM


This is intended for parents and professionals concerned with the mentally handicapped throughout the entire age range. Some selection of topics was necessary and the result is a well-edited book comprising 18 chapters each by a different author, with only an occasional overlap of subject matter (for example, discussion of drugs in use for psychiatric problems). It is difficult to cater for such a wide readership, and I think the book is more suitable for paramedical professional staff working with the mentally handicapped than for parents.

There are particularly good chapters by Walker on communication, and A and M Craft on sexuality. In the former the emphasis is on the practical applications and anyone could immediately adopt the diagnostic and therapeutic approach so clearly described. In the chapter on motor handicap perhaps the aims of treatment of severe handicap—correct positioning, promotion of learning, and prevention of deformity—could have been more clearly stated, particularly the last one, as a visit to any large subnormality hospital will show. In the sensory handicap section a brief description of the Stycar vision tests and distraction and conditioning approach to hearing tests which are often applicable to the mentally handicapped would have been helpful. Further chapters on the management of the much younger handicapped child and home intervention projects would have been useful and have given an opportunity to emphasise the community and home basis for resource and therapy which will be the manner in which the mentally handicapped will be managed in the future.

GILLIAN BAIRD


A book on neonatal neurology is welcome because this is a subject which is appreciated both by neonatologists and neurologists, but it is inevitable that it will be compared with some of the excellent volumes on neurology in the series Major Problems in Clinical Paediatrics. However it reflects the American system whereby a neurologist visits the neonatal unit rather than the British system whereby the paediatric neurologist is a trained paediatrician.

The first chapter, which discusses neonatal consultation, is inadequate because it does not give sufficient detail about the basis of the neurological examination, and in places it is inaccurate. The chapter on fits is well done and steers a difficult course through recommendations for treatment, but neonatal pharmacology is hardly mentioned. The section on asphyxia has a heavy bias towards the work of Myers, and more illustration of human neuro-pathology would have been welcome. The chapter on the ‘floppy’ infant reflects the author’s own work and is excellent, being by far the best in the book, but it demonstrates the imbalance likely to creep into single-author books in that neonatal botulism is allotted almost as much space as the management of bacterial meningitis. Next there are chapters on metabolic disease, congenital malformation, and infection. I should have liked more about the practical details of management. None of the current topical thorny problems encountered in British neonatal neurology circles—such as the management of intraventricular haemorrhage, the place