Book reviews

Clinical Disorders in Pediatric Gastroenterology and Nutrition. Edited by Fima Lifshitz. Vol. 1 in Pediatrics Series. (Pp. 464; illustrated + tables. Sw.fr. 94 hardback.) Marcel Dekker: New York. 1980.

Here is yet another contribution to the rapidly expanding literature on paediatric gastroenterology. This book is based on a postgraduate course held on 24-25 April 1978 in Manhasset, New York. As a result there are no fewer than 31 contributions. Inevitably this leads to unevenness of style and some topics, inflammatory bowel disease for example, are covered in 3 different chapters.

The aim of the book is to focus on current concepts in pathophysiology and management of gastrointestinal and nutritional disorders commonly encountered in paediatrics. It is in 5 sections: hepatobiliary disorders, gastrointestinal disorders, intestinal absorption disorders, diarrhoeal disorders, and consequences of gastrointestinal disorders. As can be seen some topics overlap. Many of the review articles are valuable and comprehensive—for example, Alan Walker's chapter on 'Intestinal defences in health and disease', and 'Carbohydrate metabolism' by Fima Lifshitz.

This book provides a thorough and up-to-date review of these topics and will provide a valuable source of information; as such it should be in the libraries of children's hospitals and hospitals with paediatric departments.

J A WALKER-SMITH

Nine Years Old. By Margaret Pollak. (Pp. 196; illustrated + tables. £10.50 hardback.) MTP Press: Lancaster. 1979.

In 1972 Margaret Pollak, who was at that time working in a group practice in south London, wrote her book *To-day's three-year-olds in London*. Now, 8 years later and from an academic post in London, she has sought out and reported on the same children and compared and contrasted their present quality of life and achievements with those of her earlier

findings. The first survey comprised 163 children who were allocated into one of three groups, depending on the ethnic origins of their parents. A similar pattern of cultural observation and comparison has been preserved in this book. Altogether 85% of the children were traced for longitudinal review. Most of the children were seen at school and measurements of their heights and weights were taken, and medical records were checked if available. As part of the study the children were given tests to determine their reading scores, spatial skills, and intelligence. In addition they completed a questionnaire on how they saw themselves in relation to home and school. Separately their mothers provided replies to enquiries ranging from the state of home and family to their perception of their children. Teachers were asked to place the children on a 3-point scale for behaviour and academic achievement.

A great deal of work has gone into this study. The participation of parents, teachers, and the children has provided the author with a remarkable and enviable experience which she has used to show that cultural differences in child-rearing practice, particularly between the indigenous population and those of West Indian extraction, have a great influence on subsequent achievement. Children who when tested at 3 years of age had lower development scores on adaptive, personal-social, and language scales were likely to reflect their earlier and continued deprivation by lower intelligence scores, reading comprehension, and spatial ability at 9 years of age. An interesting observation, and one which merits more detailed analysis, is that tests for adaptive development in young children are as good a predictor of later verbal skills and reading comprehension as are tests for language development. Sadly, Dr Pollak's work shows that even after 4 years of education the children had failed to achieve intellectual 'catch-up'. The meticulous presentation of factors acting against the West Indian child achieving his full potential in an inner city area of an adoptive country cannot fail to stimulate doctors, health visitors, teachers, and planners to action. Subjectively the evidence produced by Dr Pollak is irrefutable, we all know it, but rarely has it

been spelt out with such diligence. Although the findings stress the culturally-induced problems of the West Indians, the same problems can be seen if inadequate parenting, for whatever reason, exists thus placing a child at risk of life-long disadvantage.

Some doubt must be expressed about the quality of the quantitative arguments. However, few would disagree with the author's conclusion that there is a need for parenthood and child development to be taught regularly in schools. Many would go further and state that these subjects should be a compulsory part of the curriculum. This book is an excellent descriptive report of young children from different ethnic backgrounds growing up in a working class area in inner London.

ROSEMARY D GRAHAM

Out of School. Modern Perspectives in Truancy and School Refusal. Edited by L Hersov and I Berg. (Pp. 377; illustrated + tables. £15.50 hardback.) Wiley: Chichester. 1980.

We all know that lateral thinking can be illuminating and we may have received occasional insights into a clinical problem by a casual reading of someone else's erudite journal. The Wiley series of *Studies in Child Psychiatry*, of which this is the second volume, aims to bring together mutually interesting research papers in child development and child psychiatry. This collection of papers on absence from school will be useful to paediatricians, educationalists, and others with a special interest in truancy and school refusal, or with merely a common concern for schoolchildren.

For those who like statistics, there are figures to measure truancy both in the various national regions and in different social strata, and an evaluation of methods found to have been effective in improving school attendance. There is also a record of research into the background of children absconding from residential institutions. Those more interested in clinical commentaries will appreciate in particular Waller and Eisenberg's description of the 'masquerade syndrome'. There are