Book reviews

Atlas of Renal Pathology. By R A Risdon and D R Turner. Volume two of the Current Histopathology series. Series editor G A Gresham. (Pp. 96; illustrated + tables. £17.50 hardback.) MTP Press: Lancaster. 1980.

This atlas covers every important aspect of renal pathology—such as, congenital malformations, infections, vascular disorders, interstitial nephritis, and the many varieties of glomerulonephritis—and is aimed at the diagnostic histopathologist (trained or in training) as well as the clinical nephrologist. It consists of 18 sections, each comprising a brief resumé of the histopathological features together with some important clinical associations, and is illustrated by many colour plates including both gross specimens and photomicrographs.

The authors are well known for their contributions to knowledge of renal disease, and the factual content of this book is both accurate and up to date. The illustrations are generally well chosen, although there are 12 photomicrographs of Alport's syndrome and only 2 of the congenital nephrotic syndrome. The colour photomicrographs have reproduced well but, because their size is small much detail is lost especially in low-power views. The few electron micrographs are of poor quality and suffer even more from low magnification so that fine details, such as the basement membrane alterations characteristic of Alport's syndrome, are difficult to discern.

As the atlas demonstrates, the techniques used in the preparation of renal biopsy specimens differ appreciably from those used routinely for surgical and necropsy specimens. However, while the authors' own perfection is obvious, there is unfortunately, no mention of the technical difficulties which may be encountered, nor is there mention of the artefacts which can encourage the unwary to make erroneous diagnoses. Because of its limitations, an atlas such as this is not a substitute for personal tuition and experience, but if it were used as a form of illustrated lecture notes it would provide a useful back-up to more formal teaching.

R H R WHITE

Heart Disease in Infancy. By J H Moller and W A Neal. (Pp. 502; illustrated + tables. £23.75 hardback.) Appleton-Century-Crofts: New York. 1981.

The scope of this book covers the first year of life, but there are some references to later childhood; the authors do not indicate the readership for which it is intended. Some subjects are accorded extensive coverage as—for example, cardiac catheterisation from staffing to a detailed account of the technique, or the measurements of structures derived from M-mode echocardiography, or AV conduction measurements (His bundle). There are inconsistencies; for example, where reference is made to the scale of loudness of murmurs the definition given is insufficient to allow the reader to make use of the scale, and where reference is made to QRS and T axis measurements the reader is not shown how to make them. Some aspects of this book suggest that it might prove to be a vademecum for the paediatric cardiologist, but the general tenor indicates that it is more suitable for the general paediatrician who wants a firm grasp of paediatric cardiology, or for a paediatric cardiologist in training who needs a substantial summary of the subject.

In spite of the acknowledged importance of the cardiology of infancy, and especially of the newborn, to confine the scope of a work to this age group is to provide an artificial, awkward, and unsatisfactory presentation of congenital heart disease. A widely ranging bibliography is supplied but, as is inevitable with such a rapidly advancing and expanding subject, neither here nor in the text can all the most up-to-date views be represented. There are many illustrations, most of which are helpful; less so are some straight x-ray films of the thorax given to show variations in cardiac contour or altered pulmonary blood flow. The book contains a wealth of useful information and is clearly written, even where the best traditions of English grammar are set aside.

E N COLEMAN

Pediatric Endocrinology. By S D Frasier. (Pp. 375; illustrated + tables. £16.60

hardback.) Grune & Stratton: New York. 1980.

There have been few books on paediatric endocrinology since the pioneer text by Lawson Wilkins in the 1960s. Since then there has been a substantial increase in our understanding of endocrinology and thus in the investigation and treatment of endocrine disorders; therefore this new single author textbook is timely. Dr Frasier is one of the most experienced paediatric endocrinologists in North America and he has written what is primarily a practical, clinical book for the general paediatrician. After two introductory chapters on normal endocrine physiology and the evaluation of endocrine tests there follows a comprehensive series of problem-orientated chapters on such topics as growth, sexual development, goitre, mineral metabolism, and hypoglycaemia; unfortunately only traditional units are used.

The author's intention is to give a background of normal physiology and laboratory evaluation before proceeding to the study of endocrine disease. These first two chapters are disappointing because they are unclear. The first on basic endocrinology is so compressed that the stream of facts, often with little explanation or discussion and with generally unhelpful diagrams, becomes at times distinctly indigestible. The second chapter on laboratory evaluation of endocrine function is better, but in an area where many paediatricians have difficulty in knowing which tests to perform it is important to give concise instructions on the appropriate tests and their interpretation and this chapter fails to do this.

The rest of the book expresses the author's wealth of clinical experience, and the balance of the more common endocrine disorders against rarities is nicely held. Each chapter has a comprehensive and up-to-date list of key references. Because of the format there is some repetition; this need not be a fault, although the layout causes problems when attempting to read about a particular topic which has a variety of presentations—for example, congenital adrenal hyperplasia. The major criticism is the tendency for facts to be presented without