

adequate discussion which makes both reading and understanding difficult; this is particularly apparent in a chapter on abnormalities of sexual differentiation, but other chapters, where the endocrine problems are less complex, are more easily read.

These difficulties should not deter the interested reader, and for those who are prepared to read slowly and carefully all the information is available. With the present dearth of paediatric endocrine textbooks I would, despite the criticisms, recommend this book for the hospital library.

D C L SAVAGE

**Practical Genetic Counselling.** By P S Harper. (Pp. 296; illustrated + tables. £12.50 hardback.) Wright: Bristol. 1981.

Dr Harper, Reader and Consultant in Medical Genetics at the Welsh National School of Medicine, set himself a formidable task when writing this book. He emphasises that it is intended primarily for clinicians in family practice and hospital specialties; and it is clear that he hopes to encourage more doctors to do their own genetic counselling.

To succeed the book must first persuade doctors that they can handle certain genetic problems which they would have previously either side-stepped or referred elsewhere; and secondly, it must provide enough accurate factual information to allow them to carry out the task properly. There is an ever present danger of succeeding with the first aim, but falling short on the second, and for this reason such a book must be judged by the most exacting standards.

Although I think it unlikely that any other clinical geneticist in Britain could have surpassed this work, I have some general reservations, and the few almost inevitable factual errors must be corrected in future editions. In the first 8 chapters all the general aspects of genetic counselling in Mendelian, non-Mendelian, and chromosomal disorders are covered. There is also a general account of prenatal diagnosis, carrier detection, and consanguinity, as well as of topics—such as non-paternity, and artificial insemination by donor. These chapters should encourage clinicians to tackle genetic problems, but it is doubtful whether this book alone could enable them to acquire some of the specialist skills—such as pedigree analysis in Duchenne muscular dystrophy—a view supported by the

author's hollow exhortation not to be faint-hearted because even some clinical geneticists get this calculation wrong! The relaxed style of writing is full of practical hints derived from the author's own considerable experience of genetic clinics, and this is where he has scored over the recent multi-author books on the subject from the USA.

The second half of the book covers individual diseases in a series of 15 short chapters on specific organ systems. The entries vary considerably in detail, usefulness, and accuracy, reflecting Dr Harper's own areas of expertise. At this point one begins to wonder if a multi-author text might not be preferable, but I think that would be the wrong approach. It might be better to be more selective and include a little more detail rather than have a lot of disorders covered by only a few lines. Another problem for which there is no easy answer is whether lists of diseases, grouped under their usual type of inheritance, are useful. Some readers would be misled by the table 'Mendelian disorders causing or frequently associated with mental retardation'. Neurofibromatosis and Duchenne muscular dystrophy are followed by the comment 'not constant', which might imply that mental retardation was constant in all the other disorders listed, which clearly it was not.

I think this will be a popular book and, on balance, it makes a positive contribution to genetic counselling. The greatest omission is a definition of which situations are generally best handled by a clinical geneticist or a specialist with a very great interest in the genetics of the disorder; without this I think the main effect will be to increase referrals to genetic clinics rather than to increase the genetic counselling in general clinics.

MARCUS PEMBREY

**The Practical Management of the Developmentally Disabled Child.** Edited by A P Scheiner and I F Abroms. (Pp. 461; illustrated + tables. £28.50 hardback.) Mosby: St Louis. 1980.

This book is of American multi-authorship with two main author/editors whose experience in dealing with every aspect of care of the developmentally disabled is clear throughout the text. Their main aim is to provide primary care medical and paramedical personnel with the skills necessary to screen, diagnose, evaluate, and develop treatment plans.

To date this is one of the best books in its field that I have read, and it is very suitable for doctors interested in developmental paediatrics. Research on both sides of the Atlantic is well represented and up to date although the testing procedures are inadequately described and, despite a good general chapter on intervention, discussion of exact management and critical evaluation of therapeutic interventions is missing. In general this book deals with single major disabling conditions; the severely multiply handicapped child presents particular assessment and therapeutic challenges.

Two of the most important questions that the primary care doctor has to answer are 'Can he see?', and 'Can he hear?' Well-evaluated methods of testing young children of different ages which are useful also for testing the mentally or physically handicapped child are inadequately described.

The first four chapters on 'Children at risk of neuro-developmental disability' and 'Early assessment' are particularly good. It would have been helpful in the chapter on 'Hearing loss' to have learnt about language acquisition in the deaf, how to encourage this, alternative communication, and additional problems—such as behaviour—as well as to learn of the influence on language and school learning of mild hearing loss due to catarrh, and how to test the hearing of children of different ages. Several scales for neuro-developmental assessment are described and compared, but yet another format is described later without details about its evaluation. The differing aetiologies of different categories of mental retardation are not mentioned, and the role of disadvantaged social circumstance plus minor disabling conditions could have been stressed. The section on 'Programme planning for the visually handicapped' by Carol Donovan is helpful and practical, but the sections on 'Therapeutic management with language and motor disabilities' are less good and the primary care physician will learn little about what the physiotherapist actually does, or should do, or the work of the speech therapist in a language intervention programme, although the team approach to planned therapy is stressed. Medical assessment is also described at length in 'Learning disabilities' but the significance of the findings and critical evaluation of therapy is not clear.

These criticisms are those of omission, and they also indicate the gaps of current

knowledge within developmental paediatrics. This book can be recommended as a guide to comprehensive medical evaluation of handicaps at the present time.

GILLIAN BAIRD

**Psychological Aspects of Childhood Cancer.** Edited by J Kellerman. (Pp. 321; illustrated + tables. \$32.50 hardback.) Thomas: Springfield, Ill. 1980.

This book, written mainly by American psychologists, is a multi-author text comprising two main sections. The first one has 9 chapters grouped together under the title 'The impact of illness and treatment', and includes a review of the medical background and current outlook in childhood cancer, the problems of social reintegration, the effects on adolescent patients and siblings, and the psychological effects of isolation in laminar air flow rooms. There is a report on a very detailed study of different categories of behaviour in children thus isolated, and a review of current literature on the effects of prophylaxis of the CNS in leukaemia; the final chapter is written by a patient. This section embodies much common sense and practical advice which will serve the reader well.

The second section contains 10 chapters dealing with clinical approaches to the problems. The first describes the programme of psychosocial support at one of the larger paediatric oncology units in the USA which deals with about 125 new patients a year. The number of psychosocial staff allocated to this unit is about equivalent to the staff for all psychosocial work in most children's hospitals in the

UK with a new patient load of several thousands; therefore it is not possible to compare the two treatment philosophies. There is a chapter on the use of hypnosis in the management of nausea, vomiting, and fear of procedures. Also there are useful chapters on communication with families and patients, death and dying, and terminal care at home, as well as a very good review of parent and patient groups which stresses the importance of these being controlled by professionals.

Overall I do not find this book helpful because, apart from isolated chapters, there is little discussion on how to manage the many problems which are reported as anecdotal cases and which are common to the practice of every paediatric oncologist. The language is often difficult to understand, I do not know whether this is because it is the jargon of psychologists or just the difference between the English and American languages; words like 'personological', 'acculturated', and 'family cosmology' sent me running to the dictionary, but in vain. Social workers and the few psychologists in the UK who deal with such problems might find this book helpful and a good reference source; I am sure that in North America it has a place on the library shelves of paediatric oncology units.

P MORRIS JONES

**Swenson's Pediatric Surgery**, fourth edition. Edited by J G Raffensperger. (Pp. 957; illustrated + tables. £51.00 hardback.) Appleton-Century-Crofts: New York. 1980.

This is a most welcome new edition of a

much respected book which begins by emphasising the breadth of the specialty with chapters on emotional needs, vascular access, genetics, and many other non-operative topics. However, it makes no attempt to be comprehensive and so elective urology, cardiac surgery, and the management of spina bifida are not included.

Common paediatric surgical problems and gastroenterology are dealt with authoritatively and are of value for both established and training surgeons. Swenson has retained the authorship of the chapter on Hirschsprung's disease, but after an excellent review of his own clinical experience and operation, other procedures are dismissed in 3 short paragraphs. The sections on tumours and trauma vary in standard and there is only a brief discussion of neuroblastomas.

The black and white photographs are disappointing, and many of the line drawings have poor captions. In contrast, the x-ray films reproduce clearly and each chapter is well referenced.

The chief merit of this book is that the clinical experience of one large North American Children's hospital is brought together in an easy-to-read text. The British trained surgeon will disagree with many of the stated opinions, but will be stimulated to question his or her own practice. As well as being of value to paediatric surgeons and general surgeons with a major commitment to children, it is also relevant to neonatologists and paediatricians with an interest in gastroenterology.

DAVID DRAKE