We agree with Dr Hughes's advocacy of using mainly clinical parameters for treatment control, and that 17-OHP estimations have brought an improvement in monitoring CAH patients. The correlation of testosterone with 17-OHP levels is well known but as testosterone is less sensitive it can only be a rough guide to inadequate CAH control. Perhaps a longitudinal study, possibly with several centres taking part, could evaluate the various regimens.

Proctoscopy in infancy with reference to its use in necrotising enterocolitis

Sir,
I read with interest the paper by Fenton et al., but wondered why they changed the spelling of the word 'auriscope' which is derived from the Latin auris—ear; thus an auriscope is an instrument designed for examining ears (Medical Dictionary: Faber). According to the Oxford Dictionary an 'auriscope' therefore is an instrument designed either for looking up the Goddess of the Dawn (Aurora), or for looking up an extinct European wild ox (Aurochs). This is particularly interesting as the technique described requires 'no equipment other than that which is normally to be found on a paediatric ward.' The editors must control the indiscriminate changing of the spelling of words as they lose their original meaning and the resultant language becomes unintelligible—for example, Archives of Disease in Childhood, or even necrotising enterocolitis.

Reference

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Book reviews


It is five years since the last edition was published. This edition has been extensively revised and important and topical material has been added to the neonatal section in particular, while admirable pruning has left the overall size more or less unchanged. This book occupies the middle ground of texts between the short notes approach and the multi-author volume. It is directed at the medical student and general practitioner and will be an effective competitor in this field.

A synoptic view of paediatrics is perhaps no bad thing; the strength of this approach is stressed by the lucid and consistent prose of the author plus the absence of any important gaps or duplication of content, and an appropriate distribution of attention and detail relative to the importance of topics covered is achieved. There are particularly strong areas which are often not well covered by other books of this type, these include the sections on development and assessment, handicap, emotional and behavioural problems, and the minor difficulties of infancy and childhood which cause so much anxiety for parents and family doctors.

Other parts of the book are perhaps not quite so successful; diseases are discussed by systems, but classification is poor, and the background physiology sketchy. Some sections comprise short descriptions of individual conditions with little attempt to tie them together in a more problem-orientated approach, and some medical students may not find the transition from preclinical studies particularly easy. No attempt is made to discuss treatment or practical procedures in depth, but there is a sensible and effective paediatric pharmacopeia within the book.

Those within its intended market will appreciate the author’s style and description of paediatrics as well as the 140 odd well chosen and adequately reproduced clinical photographs. This book continues to compete effectively in the middle range of paediatric texts, the clarity of print and layout contributing greatly to this, and it can be confidently recommended to all who enjoy a paediatric textbook of the traditional type.


This is a large and impressive book with 49 contributors and it concentrates on medical and psychological approaches to treatment. In many ways it is unique in that it concentrates purely on treatment and provides a wide view of the many therapeutic techniques available in child psychiatry including a range of psychotherapeutic interactions, behaviour and drug therapy, and various milieu treatments. The treatments of specific age groups and of specific disorders are considered in separate sections. The difficult topics of treatment of mental handicap and delinquency are presented, together with an interesting chapter on consultation work, and another on biofeedback.

In an all-American work one expects some difference in perspective and terminology but this is not a significant factor in this book. There is a general

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tendency to lack of detail, there is some repetition, and very little comparison of the efficacy of different treatments and evaluation of outcome after treatment; to some extent this reflects the state of current knowledge in child psychiatry.

One important omission is the absence of discussion of paediatric liaison psychiatry. Despite this I highly recommend this book both for child psychiatrists and paediatricians.

JOHN PEARCE


If general paediatricians could interpret ECGs more confidently their ability to make the correct diagnosis in congenital heart disease would be greatly improved, particularly in neonates and young infants. Many have tried to master the art but have found the available literature turgid, obscure, or tedious and have given up the attempt. This remarkable little book succeeds in making paediatric electrocardiography almost entertaining and that is no mean achievement.

All necessary subjects are covered and there are chapters on making measurements, normal values, chamber hypertrophy and localisation, conduction disturbances, and arrhythmias. As would be expected each chapter is liberally illustrated with specimen electrocardiograms, but the numerous excellent diagrams which provide pithy summaries of rather complicated problems are more important. At the end of each chapter there is a do-it-yourself quiz to check on progress, and the main section of the book ends with 18 specimen electrocardiograms which the reader is invited to analyse for himself before reading their interpretation.

Thus the book is unashamedly didactic. Its purpose is not to display the authors’ intimate knowledge of the minutiae of the subject, but to teach anyone with a minimal background experience of the subject to read ECGs, and to read them with sufficient confidence that they may be of practical diagnostic use. This approach inevitably means that there are quite a few over-simplifications and an occasional point with which I would quibble, but these are minor blemishes in an otherwise splendid volume.

Almost the best section in the whole book is the appendix, which deals with common technical errors in electrocardiograms. In my experience it is precisely reversal of limb leads, over-exuberant use of electrode jelly, and misplacement of precordial leads that cause paediatricians the most problems but these subjects are generally ignored in textbooks because they are felt to be too trivial.

If you already know a fair amount about the subject don’t buy this book, but if you have ever thought ‘if only I could make sense of these squiggles’, and would like to learn how to in a fairly painless way, hurry to the bookshop before you are too late!

FERGUS J MACARTNEY

Shorter notice


Although echocardiography is a specialist, technical area within the field of paediatric cardiology many paediatricians would benefit from an understanding of its uses and limitations. This book adequately fills the need for a clear, logical text on the subject. Beginning with basic concepts and physics both single crystal and two dimensional techniques are described with good illustrations. One important feature is that the echocardiogram as a diagnostic aid is not over-emphasised and attention is drawn to pitfalls in interpretation and technique.