

Book reviews

Can't Your Child Hear? A Guide for Those Who Care About Deaf Children. By R D Freeman, C F Carbin, and R J Boese. (Pp. 340; illustrated. £9.95 paperback.) Croom Helm: London. 1981.

This book is intended for the parents of deaf children, although the authors hope that other professional people who deal with deaf children will also gain new ideas and insights from reading it. The crusading message that purports to come out of it is for the use of a 'total communication' system; thus far it seems to promise a great deal. Suitable books for parents are badly needed and many people are trying to promote the ideas of total communication bringing together speech, lip-reading, amplification, and a sign language. The book is easy to read; it is divided into neat sections with a summary at the end of each chapter.

However, I regret that expectations are unfulfilled; the authors seem to be promoting the deaf as a minority group, with its own language, culture, and even heroes, and far from using *total* communication they suggest that simultaneous speech is not always necessary with signing and may be harmful. The use of amplification is minimised and one suspects that this is partly due to the fact that in the USA and Canada sophisticated hearing aids are not universally available for children free of charge.

I fear that the people who oppose the use of a signing system may find ammunition in this book, and although it might be helpful in the USA and Canada, conditions here are sufficiently different to make it of little value.

SYBIL YEATES

The First Year of Life. By Graham Curtis Jenkins and Richard C F Newton. Library of General Practice Series. Vol. 2. Series Editor Cyril Hart. (Pp. 278; illustrated + tables. £8.50 paperback.) Churchill Livingstone: Edinburgh. 1981.

Babies in the first months of life must be one of the groups of patients who are worst served by the general practitioner services. Firstly, there is the astonishing failure of our administrative arrangements

to register newborn babies with a general practitioner before they are discharged from the maternity hospital; secondly, health problems of small babies are so very different from those of older patients. Perusal of this highly readable volume will go a considerable way towards removing the second problem.

The first half covers care throughout the first year starting with conception, and the second half covers common diseases and disorders. An attractive innovation is the appendix of 50 multiple choice questions, together with the answers. While no paediatrician would agree with every statement in the book, the general balance is excellent: 'A frequent problem seen in general practice is that of the well baby with a cardiac murmur. Successful management rests not so much with the baby as with the handling of the parents.' 'So that unnecessary confusion and anxiety do not persist in the parents' minds. One says "persist" as however carefully the pattern and treatment of illness are explained to anxious parents there will often be a discrepancy between what one thinks has been communicated to the parents and the actual understanding that has occurred.' The trenchant style occasionally steps from the trenchant to the buccaneering, as in discussing pertussis immunisation 'so far the most careful analysis has shown no such link' (between immunisation and brain damage). In the meanwhile, years of innuendo and outright condemnation of pertussis immunisation by some members of the profession have strengthened parents' resolve, albeit mistakenly, to refuse pertussis immunisation and then by association all the immunisations offered.'

The first author is a general practitioner, and the second a consultant paediatrician, an appropriate combination and an appropriate order of authorship for a work of this kind and this readable evening's entertainment can be highly recommended to every paediatric SHO undergoing vocational training for general practice.

ROBERT BOYD

The Lung and its Disorders in the Newborn Infant, fourth edition. By M E Avery,

B D Fletcher, and R G Williams. Major Problems in Clinical Pediatrics Series. Vol. 1. Series Editors A J Schaffer and M Markowitz. (Pp. 367 including index; illustrated + tables. £26.00 hardback.) Saunders: Philadelphia. 1981.

As the authors say in their preface there have been 'phenomenal improvements in diagnosis and treatment of small infants with respiratory insufficiency'. The fourth edition of this invaluable little book is an admirable attempt to bring the reader up to date not only with physiology and pathology but also with diagnostic techniques, especially the non invasive kind. B D Fletcher (for radiology) and R G Williams (for cardiology) have carefully rewritten, expanded, and updated sections of the text. There is a whole new section on, for instance, echocardiography. The excellence, clarity, and undoubted usefulness of these sections must be attributed to the new authors but one senses the overall influence of the senior author in the way it all comes together. Mary Ellen Avery's enthusiasm, dedication, and scientific honesty shine through. The book is aimed at 'those who care for newborn babies, those who want to learn more of their pulmonary problems, and the innately curious who want a distillate of the literature'. It undoubtedly succeeds even better than the highly acclaimed previous editions; it gives background information, authority, and practical advice. The reference list has been updated; some that have been superseded by more precise observations have been removed and many new ones have been added including a large number from the 1980 literature. Thus, as well as being theoretical it is immensely practical. Every special care baby unit should have a copy, and every neonatal resident should carry the table on the inside back cover with him for reference purposes.

J W SCOPES

Pathology of Congenital Heart Disease. By A E Becker and R H Anderson. Postgraduate Pathology Series. General Editor Sir Theo Crawford. (Pp. 498 including index; illustrated + tables.