Book reviews

Crib Death: The Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. By Warren G. Guntheroth. Pp 219: \$60.75 hardback. New York: Futura, 1982.

Failure to obtain a grant from the National Institute of Child Health and Development gave Professor Guntheroth the time to write this personal monograph on cot death. As a cardiologist and physiologist interested in the subject since 1957, he has had the clinical experience and lived through the political turmoils of modern research into this subject. He has carried out a critical review of the published research and leaves the reader with no doubt about his conclusions.

The chapters include pathology, epidemiology, and theories of cardiovascular, respiratory, and other causes of sudden infant death. There are also chapters on maternal factors and management and prevention including research priorities. The index contains over 450 references including the most recently published articles.

Research into the sudden infant death syndrome has been punctuated by banner headlines of a new cause following the publication of an abstract describing 2 or 3 cases. Shortly afterwards a study of 25 patients produced the opposite conclusion and the theory was finally demolished by an exhaustive study costing hundreds of thousands of dollars. If only Professor Guntheroth could have been introduced to the research worker before he presented his initial 2 patients, a great deal of time and expense might have been saved.

Professor Guntheroth is clearly a good teacher because he spices the narrative with rapier thrusts against his opponents. When he is discussing the possibility that monitors produce parental anxiety he says that to blame the monitor is similar to executing the messenger who brings bad news.

His final conclusion is that the single most effective remedy for SIDS is a general improvement in maternal and infant health, but he mentions that this idea is not acceptable to the American public. Perhaps this applies equally to this country. Simply providing a million dollars to a scientist does not automatically generate a hypothesis that can, or

should be tested as the cause or treatment of this syndrome. This remark will not make him popular with fund raising bodies.

This book will become the standard reference book on the sudden infant death syndrome and provided Professor Guntheroth is refused further grants he may have the energy and time to provide further editions. The next time a parent asks you why the cause of sudden infant death syndrome has not yet been discovered, you will need a copy of this book to hand to him.

H B VALMAN

Clinical Reactions to Food. Edited by M H Lessof. Pp 222: £14.50. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 1983.

The publication of this volume is most appropriate at a time when both medical and lay public are subjected to numerous observations (often anecdotal, poorly substantiated, and uncontrolled) on the beneficial and adverse effects of foods. The introductory chapter by Professor MacDonald is a refreshingly objective review of the available evidence to support many of the contemporary dietary beliefs including those relating to obesity, fibre, 'natural' foods, and salt intake. When examined in this way the hard evidence available to support some of the quite firmly held beliefs is relatively scanty. Unfortunately, there is no mention of the well established neurological role of vitamin E.

The confusing interrelation of food 'intolerance', 'idiosyncrasy', and 'allergy' are clearly reviewed as well as the available evidence that foods may play an aetiological role in rheumatoid arthritis, colitis, and multiple sclerosis. The quite definite role of cows' milk protein intolerance in most infants with haemorrhagic colitis should perhaps be emphasised for paediatricians. The differing approaches of the three main groups of professionals interested in food allergy (general physicians, allergists, and ecologists) are reviewed, and it is correctly emphasised that much of the basis of the ecologists' practice has yet to be put to proper controlled trials.

Patients' attitudes to foods are reviewed in detail by Dr Lacey—a helpful chapter

on a topic where subjective attitudes are so important. Immunological and physical aspects of digestion are covered by Dr Ferguson, and this provides a useful review of the subject, in particular with considerable information on intestinal permeability which may be an important area for future research. The clinical aspects of food allergy and intolerance are comprehensively reviewed by Professor Lessof in adults, and in children by Professor Soothill. Both these chapters represent very clear reviews of the present day knowledge on the subject, although Professor Soothill's assertion that eczema is 'probably largely food allergy' would not at present receive general acceptance. The chapter on false food allergies is a comprehensive account of non-immunological food reactions, eg effects of histamine, tyramine, phenylethylamine, and alcohol intolerance. It is an excellent review of the subject, as is the detailed section on migraine by Dr Hanington. The review on coeliac disease is excellent but the facts are well established; perhaps the discussion on intolerance to other dietary proteins is more valuable.

Professor Lessof achieves his stated purpose of providing an objective examination of the problem. The clear examination of the main adverse effects of foods without too rigid a commitment to the immunological, biochemical, or psychological aspects has resulted in a balanced up to date review of the subject.

The book is excellent and is recommended reading for dermatologists, gastroenterologists, chest physicians, and paediatricians. A more widespread knowledge of these established facts on the subject would reduce the need for the many self appointed dietary experts, support groups, and self styled allergists who prey on the unfortunate individuals who consider, rightly or wrongly, that they suffer from clinical reactions to food.

J M LITTLEWOOD

Handicapped Children in the Community. By G E Wood. Pp 124: £4.95 paperback. Bristol: Wright, 1983.

Professional people caring for handicapped children are able to cooperate

much more effectively if they have some understanding of each others' work. With this in mind Dr Woods has written a straightforward account of the causes and medical management of handicap with our colleagues in the educational and social services chiefly in mind.

The author sensibly deals mainly with the common varieties of mental, physical and sensory handicap, and rarer entities are mentioned only in passing. The educational implications of each condition are clearly explained and many are illustrated by examples from the author's practice. Perhaps the role of the parent in the care of the handicapped child might have received more stress, but it is difficult to include everything in a book which is deliberately concise. The style makes for pleasant reading and is refreshingly free from medical jargon.

Dr Woods' down to earth approach and her wealth of experience enables her to write a book which may be confidently recommended to our colleagues in these other professions. Paediatricians in training will also find much accumulated wisdom as well as an excellent summary of good practice in the medical care of children with handicapping disorders.

J R MOORE

Congenital Deformities of the Spine. By R B Winter. Pp 343: \$70.00 hardback. New York: Thieme-Stratton, 1983.

This monograph represents a retrospective survey of over 1000 cases of congenital deformity of the spine treated by one centre. While adequately covering the diagnosis and some of the available methods of treatment, the text is purely descriptive and it is a pity that such an enormous clinical experience has not been converted into a management philosophy, which is so much needed with these very complex deformities.

With historical surveys the reader finds out very clearly what can be done, but what should be done is not necessarily the same. Non-operative treatment may be important for the 25% of cases that show a mild progression potential not dissimilar to the idiopathic deformity, but the value of any form of non-operative treatment for any type of deformity has never been subjected to a controlled trial and recent reports indicate that curve deterioration well into the third decade is the rule rather than the exception. This is hardly surprising if the vertebral epiphyses

do not fuse until the 25th year. The non-operative treatment chapter focusses on the old-fashioned Milwaukee brace and there is no mention of modern casting methods, while too much emphasis is placed on the posterior fusion for the progressive curve. While certainly of value for the 25% of cases of mild progression potential, it is contra-indicated in those with severe progression potential as the posterior tethering strut favours appreciable rotational progression. For the severe rigid curves, multiple anterior and posterior operations may be necessary, but I would like to have seen more emphasis on the wedge resection of the vertebral column performed in two stages, firstly anterior and secondly posterior, pioneered by Leatherman, who certainly has the world's greatest experience. Accounts of operative procedures with their attendant illustrations are excellent and the text is well set out but I would like to have seen more of an 'in depth' philosophical approach in return for the author's 6 months' sabbatical leave.

ROBERT A DICKSON

Children with Brain Dysfunction. Neurology, Cognition, Language and Behaviour. By I Rapkin. Pp 284: \$42.16 hardback. New York: Raven Press, 1982.

This book aims to explain central nervous dysfunction in terms of up to date information on how the brain works. Although short, the book provides a feast of information based on 681 references. There is a valuable glossary of those neurological terms that everyone assumes you know—but may not.

Dr Rapin begins with a review of the organisation and fine structure of the mature brain. A chapter attempting to define brain dysfunction and introducing the major types is followed by one on epilepsy. The central hundred pages of the book are a systematic discussion of the common types of long term dysfunction, including some genetic and degenerative disorders. There are chapters on motor and sensory dysfunction and disorders of attention, learning, and behaviour. In these she skilfully blends available knowledge of neuroanatomy and pathophysiology with insights gained from animal studies and neurological disease in adults and children, in order to increase our understanding of how normal function is disturbed. In chapters on language and

cognitive disorders, the more tentative aetiological background is frankly acknowledged and Dr Rapin sensibly bases her discussion on a helpful functional classification of the main varieties of learning and communication disorder. She introduces us to a number of the increasingly discriminating test instruments on which this is based. The book ends with chapters on investigation and management which, like the chapter on epilepsy, offer a rather brief summary that is less clearly related to knowledge of brain function than the rest of the book.

Paediatricians will find much of value in this monograph as a background to their clinical practice and teaching. As I hope, there will be future editions, greater stress on the function of the developing brain would make a good book even better.

J R MOORE

Adolescent Medicine. Edited by Hofmann. Pp 550: \$35.00 hardback. California: Addison-Wesley Medical Nursing Division, 1983.

Adolescent medicine has not emerged as a distinct discipline in the UK partly because of the family orientation of our primary health care system and partly because of the prevalent attitude that adolescence is the healthiest age of man. Dr Hoffman's forward to this multi-authored textbook counters the latter with a catalogue of organic and behavioural health problems facing the 10–21 year age group—a list increasingly dominated by sexual experimentation, drug and alcohol consumption, inexperienced automobile (motorcycle) driving, and concern about long term unemployment.

This textbook is aimed at primary care physicians working in the United States and it will appeal to only a limited readership in the UK. Those involved in the care of adolescents in schools, colleges, or within hospitals will gain from the better sections of this book which provide useful guidance on organising clinic facilities for adolescents (with and without parents), coping with sexual problems, drug abuse, behavioural difficulties, and chronic illness. Even healthy pursuits can generate concern and there is a useful chapter catering for the athlete.

A less satisfactory aspect of this book is the attempt to provide a systematic review of general medical disorders. The