

Book reviews

Nutrition in Mother and Child Health. By G J Ebrahim. Pp 201: £8.95 hardback, £2.95 paperback. London: MacMillan Press, 1983.

This book is part of a 'system of texts' written by the author in the MacMillan Tropical Community Health Manuals series for medical and nursing students and practising doctors in the third world. It gives much of what is required in an easily readable manner. The introductory chapter is a useful summary of food availability in the context of agriculture (traditional and modern), social systems, cultural attitudes, storage and processing facilities, and the food industry. There is a valuable list of references for further study. The second chapter deals with these same factors in relation to some common tropical foods. These two chapters contribute what is probably the most valuable information for the medical reader.

The next three sections deal with nutrition in pregnancy and fetal growth (have we finally disposed of the diphthong?), breast feeding, and the weaning period. These are informative reviews of the present state of knowledge for the student. The author succeeds in sticking to factual material and avoiding emotional issues. He does less justice to some of the recent work on the physiology of breast milk production and breast milk flow. Some important recent references are omitted. In the chapter on weaning the importance of energy density of weaning foods needs much more expansion.

Disorders of nutrition are covered in three chapters 'Protein energy malnutrition', 'Vitamin deficiencies', and 'Nutritional anaemias'. These serve the author's purpose very adequately, though more could have been written on nutritional assessment and the evaluation of applied nutrition programmes. The final chapter entitled 'Community programmes for better nutrition' is addressed to the district health team. It emphasises the importance of setting up an inventory of active nutrition programmes, an assess-

ment of vulnerable and unreached people within the community, and the development of integrated strategies to reach them. Though short, the author does provide useful insights into remedies but he ducks the burgeoning urban challenge.

In conclusion, the book provides a useful up to date summary of present nutritional problems in maternal and child health in the third world and is the best I have read in this series.

J PAGET STANFIELD

Essential Paediatric Radiology. By G M Steiner. Pp 246: £28.50 hardback. Oxford: Blackwell Scientific Publications, 1983.

This book from the radiology department of the Sheffield Children's Hospital represents a highly personal conducted tour through paediatric radiology rather than a detailed and structured textbook. The information presented is 'essential' in the sense of basic, but in places seems rather superficial. Important paediatric diseases such as hyaline membrane disease, cystic fibrosis, and rickets are, for instance, given only one x-ray each and the illustrations of tuberculosis are scattered and scanty. The section on the heart contains no illustration of the x ray appearances of transposition of the great vessels but does contain a surprisingly lengthy account of various syndromes including Bonnevie and Ulrich, and Ellis-van Creveld.

The author confines himself to discussing only plain x rays and simple contrast studies. CT scanning and ultrasound examination are not included, although the art work on the front cover seems to be taken from an ultrasound picture. The final two chapters of the book deal with the techniques of paediatric radiological investigation and radiation hazards in paediatric radiology.

The book is well produced and the illustrations are of high quality, although I counted three which were upside down. It is too restricted in its scope to serve as a

useful reference book for paediatricians faced with a puzzling x ray, and reading it from beginning to end would require considerable motivation (such as having promised to review it), but as a book to be dipped into from time to time it has a certain idiosyncratic appeal and should provide some enlightenment for most clinicians—well, do you know what Kerkring's process is?

D P ADDY

Signs and Symptoms in Pediatrics. By W W Tunnessen, Jr. Pp 654: £23.50 hardback. Philadelphia and Toronto: J B Lippincott (London: Harper & Row). 1983.

The title of this book reflects its American origins. British physicians will feel that symptoms should come first, and lead through a proper history to a diagnosis which is confirmed by the examination and, if necessary, some tests. However, the basic idea that lists of causes could be a source of diagnostic inspiration, is reasonable. The use of multiple listing systems, ie Roman and Arabic numbers, capital and small letters, within each list produces confusion. The lists are extensive but mix aetiological agents and mechanisms. Some of the diagnostic advice is unsatisfactory. It is not adequate to state that 'examination of the stool for steatorrhea is indicated in suspected cases of cystic fibrosis' without mention of sweat testing. The index lists 35 references to systemic lupus erythematosus; 27 to syphilis; 10 to asthma; 13 to scurvy. This does not reflect their relative frequency as diagnostic problems in my practice. I could not find two recent diagnostic problems (arm pain, leg ulcer) despite the 110 listed and the index.

It is unclear who would find this book useful but I do not intend to use it myself. A good paediatric textbook on differential diagnosis is still awaited.

F CARSWELL