Book reviews

Hematologic Problems in the Newborn, third edition. Major Problems in Clinical Pediatrics Volume IV. By F L Oski and J L Naiman. Pp 360: £29.75 hardback. Philadelphia: Saunders, 1982.

'As a compendium of facts and a source of references to the literature this book could be useful!' So reads the rather faint praise in the review of the second edition of *Hematologic problems in the newborn* a decade ago in the *Archives of Disease in Childhood*. The passage of time has certainly proved this prediction to be true, though, and the book has become the standard text on neonatal haematology.

The main changes in this, the third edition, are in content and layout, rather than in length. Two new authors join Professors Oski and Naiman for the sections on leucocyte and haemoglobin disorders, and the style is now double columned with references after each chapter rather than all at the end. Text revision is extensive, and emphasis has shifted in several areas. There are, for instance, greatly expanded sections on polycythaemia and hyperviscosity, and the anaemia of prematurity. Maternal plasma-pheresis to alleviate haemolytic disease is included for the first time, and the chapter on thrombocytopenia has become 'Disorders of the platelets' due to the addition of thrombocytosis and platelet function.

Despite occasional luxurious excursions into irrelevance (bilobed neutrophils are apparently especially common in rabbits) the book keeps to its title subject and is still a very manageable size. To achieve this it inevitably presupposes some background knowledge of the two specialties which it bridges at times, and the neonatologist will not find this the best source to learn about, say, Von Willebrand's disease, any more than the haematologist will about the respiratory distress syndrome.

There are few other shortcomings in this well produced volume. Its success can be confidently predicted, and it will be found on wards and in offices, as well as in libraries.

J S LILLEYMAN

Telephone Manual of Pediatric Care. By H P Katz. Pp 184: £16.20 hardback. Chichester: John Wiley, 1982.

Dr Katz is Associated Professor of Pediatrics at John Hopkins Hospital. His book is written for north America where the doctor's telephone hour is an established mode of seeking and giving advice. It is a training manual for lay-people who answer telephones when the doctor is elsewhere, or is busy, helping them to assign priorities to requests for appointments, and giving them knowledge to enable them to advise parents whether their child needs to see the doctor.

This 'telephone assistant' is taught to take a history of the complaint, with birth details or family history when appropriate, and learns the importance of infections, such as chicken pox in children receiving anti-cancer chemotherapy. From a study of 2520 telephone calls made in a 4 week period, the author has made a list of the most common acute complaints that cause parents to seek immediate contact with the doctor. Most of the book is taken up with the consideration of these conditions. Much of the information is given in the form of check lists of questions to be asked about a particular problem, with guidance as to whether or not the child should see the doctor immediately. Eighteen topics including fever, colds and earache, sore throat, cough and wheezing, croup, poisoning, and strains, are covered in this manner. The book is easy to read, and is written in an admirably clear and concise style.

Although primary paediatric care is organised differently in this country, in some surgeries and health centres receptionists do sort our requests for appointments and allocate priorities, and to do so safely they require training. This book would be a useful basis for such instruction.

KEN SIMPSON

Clinical Paediatric Haematology & Oncology. Edited by H Ekert. Pp 245: £22.50 hardback. Oxford: Blackwell, 1982.

This is a synopsis of the practice of clinical haematology and oncology as it occurs in

a specialised unit in a children's hospital. It is written for junior medical staff and members of allied professions in a concise clear form with suggestions for further reading rather than references. Should we keep it next to the protocol book to help the house officers on rotation to the ward?

As expected in a book from this editor, the section on bleeding disorders is excellent and written at just the right level. I looked in vain for a chapter on neonatal anaemia, although there is a section on haemolytic disease of the newborn (incorrectly cross referenced). Management of the thalassaemias is covered better than sickle cell disease—no mention of susceptibility to pneumococcal infection. The house officers spend a lot of time ordering and using blood products and a short chapter on this would be a welcome addition.

The practice of oncology is reviewed in a series of disease orientated chapters with most emphasis on the common tumours. Yet, the house officer spends much of his time dealing with complications of therapy or infections; chicken pox, measles, and pneumocystis are merely mentioned in a table and I looked in vain for advice on emergencies such as respiratory obstruction or spinal cord compression. A lot of time is spent worrying about psychological problems, which are tucked into the chapter on leukaemia. Last but not least he should think about the late effects of treatment.

The editors have performed no mean feat in compressing so much information into 240 pages, but I hope the next edition will combine more of the general principles and less of the particular remedies. In a rapidly changing field it seems inadvisable to give specific treatment schedules. These are better left to the protocol book, to which this work should be a companion.

JUDITH CHESSELLS

Psychobiology of the Human Newborn. Edited by P Stratton. Pp 456: £24.95 hardback. Chichester: John Wiley, 1982.

Although written primarily for developmental psychologists, this book has much