to offer the paediatrician brave enough to read further than the title. Dr Stratton has tried more or less successfully to draw together neonatal neurology, obstetrics, paediatrics, and developmental psychology, through their common interest in the normal and abnormal newborn. His aim is to persuade researchers and practitioners that it is futilie and unproductive to attempt to deal with any aspect of the newborn in isolation. He also argues that the characteristics of the newborn must be considered in relation to both present and future needs.

The book is divided into 4 sections the first of which discusses behavioural and neurologisal assessment of the newborn with contributions from Drs Prechtl and Amiel-Tison. The second section reviews extensively the experimental and other evidence of the capacity of the newborn to perceive and to learn from his environment. A chapter on the development of the nervous system and another on the newborn as an individual are also included.

A third part reviews the evidence for prenatal influences on the newborn, together with an account of obstetric practices in various cultures and of neonatal intensive care in our own. The final section contains a chapter on the infant and the social world which to a simple paediatrician consists mostly of inpenetrable jargon—operant learning represents a cross modal integration of kinaesthetic interocceptive and exteroceptive modalities—after which Dr Stratton wraps the subject up in a final chapter. All in all a challenging read for the ambitious paediatrician prepared to step out from his own small world for a while.

R W I COOKE

Annual Review of Birth Defects 1981:

The Birth Defects series got off to a good start reviewing birth defects in a detailed and logical fashion, and the early books (Volume 5, Number 1 to Volume 10, Number 4) were an enormous contribution, for they constituted an excellent up to date source of information on syndromes (to the almost complete neglect of common single malformations).

Now, unless one owns or has access to the entire set (over 100 volumes), single volumes are of very little use. These 2 are recent additions to the series, and comprise either single case reports, small studies, or brief reviews, and most of the papers cover rarities. Part A is in 3 sections; 11 papers on Mechanisms of Abnormal Morphogenesis (eg case report of congenital tick borne relapsing fever with transplacental transmission; mid-line facial defect as a teratogenic effect of metronidazole; calcium and neural tube defects); 10 papers on Prenatal Diagnosis (including a good short review of the effectiveness of prenatal screening by Brock, and an interesting report of 3 cases of fetal oedema in trisomy 18); and 3 papers on Perinatology (on the significance of meconium staining of fluid obtained at amniocentesis, the complications of maternal terbutaline and ritodrine, and a comparison of transporting babies 'in utero' or after delivery). Part B is in 2 sections—32 papers on Syndromes and 7 papers on Cytogenetics. The syndromes covered vary from the rare but important, eg the Meckel syndrome, to the newly described, such as the second recorded case of the Pilotto syndrome.

The quality of the papers in both volumes is patchy, though Part B in particular does contain some very good and interesting case reports. The books are far too specialised, however, for the average paediatrician without a very special interest in dysmorphology. Single volumes are not worth buying because they merely constitute a somewhat random assortment of papers, and only libraries or individuals collecting the series will want to purchase these books.

T J DAVID

Shorter notices


This is an attempt to provide an introduction to paediatrics for the undergraduate, but it compares unfavourably with the current British texts. The subject balance and emphasis is strange; for example 7 pages on chronic conditions with unnecessary and speculative detail, compared with a short paragraph on minimal change nephrotic syndrome.

The plethora of useful lists may attract the few, but many will be deterred by the transatlantic differences; for example social services organisation in child abuse and neglect, the availability of drugs and vaccines, and the pattern of disease (what has seen a Black Widow spider recently?).


Each time I see a child with a sleep disorder I experience a sense of boding. I have always taken seriously the restless unsettled baby, knowing how extensive the effects can be on the parents and the family.

We all have our own empiric and pragmatic ways of dealing with this problem but I never feel very hopeful. Now, from the Department of Psychobiological Medicine at the Hospital for Sick Children, Great Ormond St., comes a manual. The authors are to be commended on tackling this difficult problem so realistically, in such depth, and for providing a 'vade-mecum' for the clinician. In less than 25 pages, including three relevant case-histories, the subject is comprehensively tackled and the guidelines should give us renewed confidence in handling this difficult clinical situation.


This book, based on the postgraduate gastroenterology course held in Oxford each year, is celebrating its tenth anniversary. The contents are mainly directed at adult physicians, but this year there are four interesting chapters for the paediatrician. These are on cows' milk intolerance, hepatobiliary disorders in infancy, neonatal necrotising enterocolitis, and gastrointestinal bleeding in childhood. Each one has been well written and deserves a wider paediatric readership than it would otherwise obtain in this excellent publication.