Book reviews


This is the third volume of a paediatric habilitation series. Its authors are a paediatrician and a physical therapist working in centres in the USA. In an area of medical practice that is already well served by relevant literature a new book needs a definite message and style to be successful. This book fulfills those criteria.

Beginning with an accurate and uncontroversial historical perspective of cerebral palsy the authors go on to present an acceptable classification and methods for the diagnosis and evaluation of affected children. These are followed by a very valuable section in which normal and abnormal motor development in childhood are clearly contrasted and well illustrated. This section forms a background to a discussion at both a theoretical and practical level on the planning and execution of relevant treatment regimens.

The book also includes an overview, albeit uncritical, of the many eponymous physical treatment methods available to therapists, and a discussion on the wider aspects—medical, educational, and social, of the management of cerebral palsy. I was impressed particularly with the contribution on the management of feeding problems in severely disabled children. The authors concentrate on the problems shown by children with major rather than with minor disabilities and have largely excluded from consideration the problems of older children.

This book is of particular value both as a primer and refresher for physiotherapists treating children with cerebral palsy and for paediatricians, especially those in training, who have the care of such patients. It is too detailed to be a workshop manual but is a very useful short reference text of therapy. In fulfilling this function it is considerably helped by its eclectic approach in a field where dogma is not unknown.

L ROSEN BLOOM


Against a background of increasing public dissatisfaction with dehumanised ‘production-line’ antenatal clinics and increasing professional concern that the present pattern of antenatal care may be unproductive or even counterproductive, the editors have assembled an international team to review the nature, effects, and future of antenatal care. They review the history of antenatal care; the value of various screening tests (including a particularly well argued case for screening for pre-eclampsia); the consumer’s view of antenatal care; sources of advice including antenatal classes; dietary, pharmacological, immunological and physical treatments in pregnancy; and the organisation of antenatal care both in the UK and overseas.

This book is a series of essays rather than a comprehensive textbook on antenatal care. Designed to appeal to a wide audience, it is easily read—a remarkable achievement for 22 authors from a variety of medical and other backgrounds. The reviews of published reports are particularly comprehensive and useful. Excluded from the editor’s remit are prenatal diagnosis of metabolic and structural fetal abnormalities and the vexed question of elective delivery.

Perhaps the book should be read backwards, starting with the editors’ excellent overview of effectiveness and satisfaction in antenatal care in which myths are exploded and sacred cows desacralised. Other notable contributions are Redman’s chapters on screening for, and management of, pre-eclampsia and the chapter on hormone and beta mime therapy that is a lasting memorial to the late Anne Anderson. This book can be recommended to medical and other professionals responsible for the organisation and delivery of antenatal care as a thoughtful exposition of a topical subject: it is a pity that paediatricians play so small a part in this field.

GEORGE RUSSELL


At last—a coffee table book for the perinatologist: The ‘Atlas of Perinatology’ claims that each of 778 pictures ‘is worth a thousand words’. There are 22 chapters by 34 authors on subjects ranging from antenatal diagnosis and placental disease to resuscitation and intensive care of the newborn and congenital malformations. Although translated from the original Spanish, each chapter provides a readable if somewhat basic introduction to the illustrations that follow it in a separate block. Most of the illustrations are in colour and each author has turned out his slide collection to provide them. Unfortunately there is a great unevenness both in the quality of the photographs and their actual value in illustrating anything. Placental and lung histology sections are both well reproduced and illustrative, as is the section on lung radiographs and those on congenital malformations and infections. Resuscitation and intensive care are both poorly illustrated with amateur ‘snaps’ that on occasion are quite unintelligible. There are at least 3 photographs illustrating heelpricks and 1 showing 2 residents waiting for an ambulance. The unevenness in the book could be acceptable but for the extraordinary price, for which even today one could buy 4 or 5 useful books for the unit library. This book is only for the neonatologist who has everything.

RICHARD COOKE


This is the second edition of a book which first appeared in 1978. It has increased in size by 14% and in price by 200%, and incorporates the contributions of 8 co-authors with Professors Altman and Schwartz where originally there were only 2. Four of the 26 chapters are entirely new and 2 are retitled and reshuffled.