Book reviews

Early Diagnosis and Therapy in Cerebral Palsy: a Primer on Infant Developmental Problems. (Paediatric Habilitation Series, vol. 3). By A L Scherzer and I Ischarnuter. Pp 289: Swfr 105 hardback. New York: Dekker, 1982.

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 ROSENBLUM

Effectiveness and Satisfaction in Antenatal Care. Edited by M Enkin and I Chalmers. Pp 297: £15.00 hardback. London: William Heinemann Medical Books, 1982.

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 challenge of antenatal care. The 19 chapters 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 desanctified. Other notable contributions are Redman's chapters on screening for, and management of, pre-eclampsia and the chapter on hormone and betamimetic 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

Atlas of Perinatology. By S Aladjem and D Vidyasagar. Pp 494: £80 hardback. London: W B Saunders, 1983.

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

Malignant Diseases of Infancy, Childhood and Adolescence. By A Altman and A Schwartz. Pp 605: £59.50 hardback. Philadelphia: W B Saunders, 1983.

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. New

topics covered are dental complications of cancer, skin cancer, late effects of treatment, and nutritional consequences of cancer. Other chapters are revised from the first edition and cover the full spectrum of childhood malignancy, its natural history, detection, and treatment. The book is essentially a reference work and each topic has an extensive bibliography.

There is no shortage of books on paediatric oncology, but few attempt to be as comprehensive a review as this one. The problem the author/editors face, of course, is keeping up to date in a field that is changing rapidly, but it would seem that they have done as well as possible in this respect with only studies reported in the last 18–24 months failing to be included. Revisions, where appropriate, are extensive. The use of atrial catheters and monoclonal antibodies are discussed for the first time, for example. The balance throughout the book is good, advice is on the whole sound, and opinions are mainstream. Thorny areas like the dying child are handled well and contain more common sense than such topics usually evoke.

Perhaps the acid test of this type of book is whether it opens the literature on some relatively obscure point from an academic ward round as easily as it provides basic clinical information for the non-specialist. This one does. It is thus both a good desk top book for oncologists and a good library book for other paediatricians. Despite its high price it can be recommended.

J S LILLEYMAN

Paediatrics. Edited by H M Maurer. Pp 1077: £28 hardback. Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone, 1983.

There was a time when a physician would have tackled the single handed authorship of such a book, pitched comfortably between the limp covered student texts and the weightier source of reference for the perplexed or curious paediatrician. Now that paediatrics has its own specialties, Professor Maurer has to call upon 48 of his colleagues, mainly working in Virginia, to contribute to this 35 chapter book. The early chapters contain the basic sciences of paediatrics—nutrition, growth, and development; then discussion of the newborn, the adolescent, and community health; and lastly social, emotional, and developmental problems. The other 75% of the book is given to

descriptions of body system diseases; a useful chapter on major organ failure; and the familiar last 3 chapters of radiology, pharmacology, and laboratory values.

Print, photographs (especially x-rays), and figures are exceptionally clear; chapters finish with a short list of references, and there is a full index. Most of the systems chapters display an admirable blend of knowledge and clarity but that on genetics and inborn errors of metabolism might have been better split: in 30 pages 5 authors have little elbow room. Overlap is inevitable—for example there are 2 similar tables of theophylline drugs—and editing is not always firm. The major discussion about vesicoureteric reflux is consigned to the radiology chapter rather than with urinary tract infection (where reflux is referred to as a urographic finding). Otherwise comments reflect differences in transatlantic practice: penicillamine, monocomponent insulins, sodium cromoglycate, and nebulised adrenergic bronchodilator drugs receive little or no discussion and the suggested laboratory investigations in childhood asthma would merit pruning before confronting a hawkish MRCP examiner. Drug abuse, genital infections, and contraception probably lie outwith the repertoire of the British paediatrician and it is sad to see that failure to thrive is omitted from an otherwise first class chapter on social and emotional problems.

Do not be deterred by these criticisms (they were solicited in the introduction)—especially if you are a candidate or examiner in higher examinations. This moderately priced volume will see you through most such encounters and there are few British rivals—yet.

T L CHAMBERS

Child Health in a Changing Environment. By G J Ebrahim. Pp 231: £9.50 hardback, £4.50 paperback. London: MacMillan International, 1982.

This book is written for paediatricians and all professionals responsible for the care of children. It aims to provide through facts and figures an understanding of the dimensions of childhood disadvantage and the inequalities and inequities existing in our present world society, and of the degree of improvement reported from recent interventions.

The author's intention is to supply

readers with the 'strong voice of science' with which to act more effectively as advocates for children in the corridors of power—political and social, where decisions are made that can effect a better, more healthy environment. He believes rightly that such facts and figures are necessary to change political will towards providing greater care for the less privileged and overcome the powerful vested interests that would retain the status quo.

The author has indeed put a very extensive survey of recent published reports at the disposal of the reader, but is this enough? It will need a stronger voice than science to influence the present emphasis on collective, self centred, commercial productivity and the enormous expenditure on the arms race.

Such a voice does indeed surface at intervals throughout this book in the moral indignation at the magnitude of the plight of children that is underlined by these figures, though it stops short of that ultimate imperative which proclaims that it would be better to be cast into the depths of the sea anchored to a millstone, than to offend one of these little ones.

The book will face the criticism of those who feel the changes it supports are too uncomfortable in their challenge to the establishment or too familiar and unrealistic to make any impression on the current trends. It will be rejected by those who feel it is 'tangential to main health issues' and no part of a doctor's business and by some, to whom it will appear as preaching proletarian left wing militancy.

I hope the book will be read by many for it makes a substantial contribution to the evidence upon which advocates for children must be built—and urgently.

J PAGET STANFIELD

The Nature and Nurture of Twins. By E M Bryan. Pp 223: £9.95 paperback. London: Balliere Tindall, 1983.

Parents are naturally full of anxiety when told they are to expect twins and it is helpful for the obstetrician or paediatrician who may be consulted to have at hand a reasonably comprehensive account of the subject as is provided by Dr Bryan in her monograph. This begins with a rather cursory account of twinning in mythology and literature, which may be useful or even interesting should have at least attempted to relate primitive ideas to the facts of life as we know them today.