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 atlantal 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


There was a time when a physician would tackle the single handed authorship of such a book, pitched comfortably between the limb 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: penicillinase, monocomponent insulin, sodium cromoglicate, 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


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 policy and 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 together an 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 cast into the depths of the sea anchored to a million then 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 we advocate for children must be built—and urgently.

J PAGET STANSFIELD


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 is both useful or even interesting should have at least attempted to relate primitive ideas to the facts of life as we know them today.