—including those discovered by psychoanalysis. The writer is on firmer ground in dealing with the practical aspects of twinning: its possible causes; its epidemiology; its relation to perinatal mortality; the problems it presents to mothers, fathers, and siblings and indeed the twins themselves; and the light it throws as an experiment of nature on human reproduction in general. There is a particularly good section on the loss of a twin and how difficult this makes it for a mother inhibited from mourning the dead baby from needing to care for the living one—who then may be cast as a scapegoat by the family in their bereavement. Clearly there are emotional problems connected with twinning that make the comparison of identical twins separated at birth (by which time all sorts of environmental differences may have already made their impact) not at all the straightforward separation of the effects of nature and nurture that followers of the late Dr Elliot Slater would have us believe. In this context it is surprising that the author does not refer to Keil Kessell’s earlier book; but her preoccupations are much more to do with how to manage, for instance, breast feeding than what lessons if any, are to be learned about the origins of emotional illness. Within her limits she succeeds admirably and hers is a book which the reviewer would be glad to have his copy of, though others may jib at the price of nearly £10.00 for a paperback which in Scandinavia would probably have been published as a supplement to the Acta.

As it is, every neonatal unit should have its copy for instant reference, and most paediatricians will be tempted to buy it. At a time when too many books are published this is one that was worth writing and is worth reading.

J A DAVIS

Shorter notices


One hundred and fifteen excerpts of simultaneous recordings of heart rate, respiration, and transcutaneous oxygen tension from healthy newborn infants are presented in this catalogue. Selected from the records of 3000 babies the aim has been to show the effects of activity and the limits of normal variability. A detailed statistical analysis emphasises the complexity of these covariations. This book will fascinate students of ‘normality’ in term infants but does not attempt to deal with the even more difficult problem posed by variability in preterm infants.


This volume is the proceedings of last year’s ‘Clear’ symposium on low level lead exposure and children’s health. Sections on the sources, toxicity, and neuropsychological effects of lead include work published elsewhere—for example Needleman’s important tooth lead studies. The discussions are valuable and Professor Rutter’s introduction and conclusions form excellent reviews of the subject. With the current political and scientific debate, the book should attract attention from paediatricians interested in this area of preventive medicine.


Two experienced psychologists have written a good account of the methods for improving communication between handicapped children and those who care for them. The book is divided, chapter by chapter, into an account of general principles and a mixture of examples and exercises suitable for intelligent, literate parents and care staff. Someone needs to write a cartoon version for the others, perhaps the majority. There is a useful bibliography.

Prevention of Spina Bifida and other Neural Tube Defects. Edited by John Dobbing. Pp 272: £17.60 hardback. London: Academic Press, 1983. All 6 chapters are in some way connected with the hypothesis that neural tube defects might be preventable by multivitamin supplements. Most of the material has already been published. More interesting are the authors’ critical comments of one another’s papers, sometimes accompanied by a rebuttal. The book neither provides the answer to whether vitamins are any use nor to whether the proposed MRC trial is a good way to find out, but careful reading might lead to a slightly better informed sort of ignorance.


The regular appearance of new editions since its first publication 30 years ago is itself a tribute to this classic. The book remains a compact and clearly written guide of value to all those concerned with children.


The 26 contributors from the USA provide a useful medium sized textbook. Its use for reference is enhanced by the clear presentation and comprehensive references at the end of each section.


Approximately 280 articles are summarised in about 400 words plus relevant tables or illustrations and are grouped together under the different systems. Nearly all the articles were originally published in American or British journals between March 1981 and February 1982.


This is an excellent photographic record of human development from conception until the end of organogenesis. Much use is made of microdissection, the scanning electron microscope, and surface histocchemistry—all of which aid comprehension of these complex processes. The quality of the illustrations is extremely good and the explanatory text concise and easy to follow. This book would be very helpful used in conjunction with one of the standard embryology textbooks.