lished biochemical data about Singapore syndrome. (Blood glucose concentrations were less than 2.8 mmol/l in 6 of 14, 7 of 18 had a two to three fold rise in transaminase activity, 2 of 12 had coagulation abnormalities, but blood ammonia values were not reported.) Seizures, the most common presentation of Singapore syndrome, occurred in 48% (11 of 23) of my Reye’s syndrome patients.

From a study of their published work and in personal discussions several years ago, it is my impression that Ayathurai and colleagues have described a separate, quite distinct syndrome, possibly more akin to the febrile seizure than to Reye’s syndrome. The differences, particularly in clinical presentation, laboratory data, and prognosis, given the conservative approach to management, make it unlikely that Singapore syndrome is a subgroup of the syndrome described by Reye et al.8

Finally, a note of caution to those who continue to use a ‘wait and see’ policy in stage II Reye’s syndrome; it is an unpredictable and unforgiving disorder. Despite intensive care and vigorous measures to control intracranial pressure using ‘prophylactic’ hyperventilation etc, 25% of the Belfast patients died or incurred severe, permanent neurological damage.

References

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Book reviews


The first edition of this book in 1977 established it as the authoritative text on the nature of human chromosomal defects and the clinical syndromes they produce. This second edition has 176 more and bigger pages and includes the discoveries of the intervening years. Eighty-six individual or groups of conditions are now described and illustrated fully with clinical photographs. Each autosomal has its own chapter, while that on the sex chromosomes contains information on 10 sex chromosome anomalies as well as pieces on true and pseudo-hermaphroditism, mental retardation, and fragile X-syndrome. There is also a section on polyplody followed by seven useful appendices on chromosomal techniques, dermatoglyphics, terms used in clinical description, types and mechanism of formation of chromosomal aberrations, chromosomal nomenclature, the human gene map, and syndrome finding. Every chapter is prefaced by models of the relevant chromosome, with bands and numbers of increasing complexity that allow the position of breakage and site of genetic markers to be broadly assigned. There follows a list of single gene diseases coded on that chromosome as well as a more complex list of known markers with their positions. The clinical features of each syndrome are summarised and then detailed systematically. There are selected references. Comments on the cytogenetic study, dermatoglyphics, and laboratory findings follow.

This book does not have any serious contenders and now that the peak of chromosomal discovery seems past it is likely to remain the main reference text for paediatricians, clinical geneticists, and cytogeneticists for many years to come. It is obviously more exhaustive than the chromosome section in the third edition of Smith’s Congenital Malformations in Man and should be considered complementary to that volume. For those paediatricians who like the diagnostic challenge of the dysmorphic and retarded child, and for those who would like to interpret the chromosomal material they receive, this is an essential volume. It certainly will be most welcomed by the clinical geneticists who want to look beyond the microscope. A first class and beautifully produced volume.

J INSLEY


The spinal muscular atrophies are common compared with most genetic disorders, almost equalling the muscular dystrophies in their incidence; they are confusingly variable in their presentation, and poorly covered in most paediatric texts. A scholarly monograph, therefore, especially one by the acknowledged experts gathered here by Drs Gamstrop and Sarnat, is most welcome. As a summary of recent knowledge it is admirable; yet it has some disappointing features. Almost every chapter has its own approach to classification, a serious error when confusion in classification is already one of the most problematic features of this group of disorders. The format of the book is odd too. There is a series of useful chapters on the clinical features, pathology, electrophysiology, use of ultrasonography, treatment, role of parent group therapy in management, and strategies for research, but each chapter is followed by another called a ‘commentary’ which tries to contrive a different tack but inevitably covers some of the same ground.
or fills in the corners rather inefficiently. Only Dr Pearn's chapter on genetics is allowed to stand without a 'doppel-ganger' of this type. Little real discussion emerges from this arrangement. There is too much jargon in the chapters on parents' groups for them to win converts to this debatable approach to counselling. There is so much that is valuable in this book that it seems a shame to have weakened it by not arranging for the authors to meet to coordinate their approach. Overall, however, it provides by far the most comprehensive and up to date review of these neglected disorders, and for this reason it is certainly to be recommended.

D GARDNER MEDWIN


The forward to this book was written by Tom Lind who positively glows saying that it is an invaluable book for anyone prescribing for women during pregnancy. This is perhaps to be expected for he has openly confessed that Frank Hytten, one of the authors, is his 'guru', but reviewed through paediatric or even neonatal eyes, this book is not exactly what the doctor ordered. Perhaps the title is slightly misleading. It is not the sort of book with an exhaustive reference that one can consult when an abnormal baby is born to a mother taking unusual drugs to see if similar problems have been reported previously. Nor is there any comment about drugs and breast feeding. This is not a criticism but merely an observation on the contents. The book is generally more scientific and theoretical and is, therefore, of less immediate value to the average neonatologist.

The first half is very physiological and to those who have read that excellent book Clinical Physiology in Obstetrics¹ there will be a strong ring of familiarity of style and even contents. The meat of the matter is the effect of pregnancy on drug handling. Most drugs given in pregnancy are primarily for the benefit of the mother, so much space is given to the altered pharmacokinetics of the drug caused by the changes in maternal tissues in the various stages of pregnancy. For the average perinatologist, the pharmacokinetics vary from difficult to impossible but I admit to being wiser now about the factors affecting placental transfer.

The second half of the book deals with individual drugs in more detail. An enormous amount of work has gone into this section where the world's literature has been critically reviewed and even recalculated to bring together in two or three pages a synopsis on each drug or group of drugs. The data provided usually include dosage, half life, volume of distribution, plasma clearance, and cord/maternal plasma ratio for the drug. There are more than 500 references so although the design of the book necessitates brevity, those who seek will find—from antibiotic to anticonvulsant.

Generally then, this is a book for obstetricians with a pharmacological bias. It is not light reading but the scientific contents cannot be faulted. It has great merit for those in this narrow field.

Reference


J G BISSENDEN


This is a multiauthor book by representatives of the three main therapy disciplines—physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and speech therapy; and the editor is herself a physiotherapist. It reviews the roles and contributions of these therapists in childhood disability and handicap. There are chapters on the principles of development and assessment, and on the problems of multidisciplinary teams which show the extent to which a theoretical basis is shared by these three disciplines. These introductory chapters are followed by a series of contributions on specific problems and disorders. Each chapter includes both discussion of the aims of therapy and numerous practical suggestions.

Inevitably there is some overlap between chapters and there are some differences of opinion, but in the current state of the art this is a strength rather than a weakness. The standard of writing and presentation is high and the editor's controlling hand can be clearly discerned. There are no back chapters, but several are outstanding. In particular, the section on 'Brittle bones' is a model of clear, concise writing on a rather obscure subject. I also enjoyed the courageous though rather ambitious attempt to relate research in movement, psychology and physiology to the everyday work of the therapist.

The orientation of the editor evidently explains the relatively small amount of space devoted to language and communication disorders, and in particular I thought the various methods of alternative communication deserved more detailed attention. The application of behavioural techniques to the therapies also merits a complete chapter to itself and perhaps a more authoritative discussion. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the techniques recommended by the authors is sadly deficient and perhaps this difficulty should be discussed, particularly in relation to areas which overlap with education such as learning difficulties.

These are small criticisms. Paediatric Developmental Therapy brings together a great deal of information and practical experience. At this price it should be within the reach of all professionals involved in child handicap, and may perhaps also be useful to the more sophisticated parent.

DAVID HALE