Book reviews

Clinical Pediatric Oncology. By W W Sutow, D J Fernback, T J Vietti. Pp 889: £52 hardback. Oxford: Blackwell Scientific Publications, 1984.

All aspects of childhood cancer and its treatment are the subject of this comprehensive text now into its third edition. Inevitably perhaps it is longer (60%), costs more (300%), and has more authors (60%) than the 11 year old first edition and also now claims to be 'international'. As only one of the 57 contributors comes from outside the United States this is perhaps a bit of an overstatement. Its production has clearly been plagued by problems, not least of which must have been the unfortunate death of the senior editor in December of 1981. Presumably as a consequence of this publication has apparently been delayed, and the book unfortunately shows its age in the more volatile topics covered and in not including recent references.

The text falls naturally into two parts. The first 300 pages deal with the scientific, organisational, and philosophical aspects of paediatric oncology, whereas the remaining 500 provide a disease by disease treatise. The first section can be read, the second is rather to be referred to. The multi-author approach has produced, as it must, good and not so good chapters together with a degree of duplication. A more irritating flaw is occasional mistakes in references. It can be accepted that odd errors must arise in any text of this size, but twice while reading through for this review a genuine attempt to follow a reference was thwarted by the number in the text referring to an irrelevant article.

Despite its drawbacks this is a book most paediatric oncologists will want. It may not be the best text available but it is still one of the most comprehensive and represents a suitably authoritative view point. It will also appeal to librarians for similar reasons. The editors should be hard at work on the fourth edition now.

J S LILLEYMAN

The Obese Child. By L S Taitz. Pp 256: £18.00 hardback. Oxford: Blackwell Scientific Publications, 1983.

The publication of this book is well timed

since public and scientific debate on the relation of diet to health and disease is reaching a crescendo and obesity is by far the most common overtly nutritional problem in our 'over provided' society. The author has a long standing interest in childhood nutrition and a logical approach which enables him to discern woods from trees in this exceptionally well forested region. He also has a clear and readable style and the text, but not the few illustrations which are poor, is concise and clearly set. The omens are therefore good and the reader is not disappointed.

The problem of childhood obesity is approached from a wide base with full consideration of epidemiology, pathogenesis, and management. In each area the author produces a lucid and balanced account of current thinking taking great pains to do justice to all views on matters of controversy but sometimes seeming too scrupulous in refusing to declare a partisan view. Having learned to trust him, the reader wants to know what he thinks.

Aspects of obesity in adult life and experimental work in animals are considered only when directly relevant to the problem in childhood. Each chapter carries a well chosen list of 30 to 100 references from the vast and confusing literature, the most recent dating from 1981.

Overall, the chapters on the pathophysiology of obesity carry far more conviction than those on management, no doubt reflecting the sad fact that as a clinical problem obesity remains intractable. It was disappointing to find no discussion of the recent gospel according to high fibre.

This book is highly recommended to paediatricians and others interested in childhood nutrition as a clear, relatively brief yet comprehensive and balanced account of this important and difficult subject.

NICK BARNES

All About Twins. A handbook for parents. By Gillian Leigh. Pp 253: £4.95 paperback. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983.

This book, written by a doctor who is herself the mother of twins, is a delight to read and is a goldmine of information for

prospective parents on what to do if there are two.

Basic facts about the conception, incidence, and diagnosis of twins are provided including answers to many of the common questions that are raised. Dr Leigh writes throughout with great humour and compassion about the trials and tribulations of a twin pregnancy and its sequelae and gives much practical advice. There are many useful tips on how to cope with the numerous double acts demanded by twins after birth including a *Which* type guide to all the necessary equipment. The problems and pitfalls posed by infant and toddler twin life are excellently covered as are the different ranges of behaviour and development up to school age. The author writes convincingly about how to deal with two yelling fighting children and yet she also manages to put things from the twins own point of view.

This book should make compulsive and entertaining reading for mothers and fathers of twins before and after they are born. Although written primarily for parents, it can be highly recommended to paediatricians, obstetricians, midwives, and health visitors, all of whom could gain a vivid insight into the physical, emotional, and financial problems posed by producing more than one baby at a time.

GILLIAN GANDY

Parent-Baby Attachment in Premature Infants. By J A Davis, M P M Richards, N R C Robertson. Pp 325: £17.95 hardback. Beckenham, Kent: Croom Helm, 1983.

This book looks broadly at the evidence on the parent-infant bonding relationship for those babies beginning life in a neonatal unit. The special needs of parents of babies whose birth is not straightforward must be accepted and treated in parallel to the problems of their infants, sadly a practice far from universal.

The first section of the book sets the theoretical background. A psychologist first discusses the general considerations of parent-child relationships. The evolution of special care units is described by Professor Brimblecombe and there is a very useful chapter on ethical issues in the newborn by Professor John Davis. This