Book reviews

Paediatric Neurology. Edited by E M Brett. Pp 613: £45.00 hardback. London and New York: Churchill Livingstone, 1983.

Oh, what a lovely book! Beautifully produced, excellently illustrated, and written with enviable style it is representative of British medical writing at its best. Here is paediatric neurology described from long experience and with deep consideration in a book of great maturity. It is a large and comprehensive account of the subject with facts a plenty for use, as presumably it will most often be used, as a work of reference; but it is also a book for just reading because the stroma around the facts is rich in the philosophy and ethos of the children's physician. From the fun of making a game out of testing knee jerks to the deeply felt tragedy of progressive muscle disease the book is replete with clinical experience and wisdom. I find it difficult to imagine a more moving ending to a chapter on Duchenne dystrophy than this: 'Life for these boys will be short, but it need not be brutish. "The wonder of the world, the beauty and the power, the shapes of things, their colours, lights and shades; these I saw. Look ye also while life lasts".'

Dr Brett has written 17 of the 24 chapters himself (two of them in collaboration). There is, therefore, an overall uniformity of style throughout the book, though some slight unevenness is occasionally introduced by the other authors, all of whom have served the editor well. For instance, Mr H B Eckstein in a helpful chapter on myelomeningocele rather surprisingly describes alpha fetoprotein testing as 'one of the greatest medical advances in our lifetime' but omits any reference to ultrasound diagnosis or to the possibility of prevention by preconceptional vitamin supplementation; but both of these omissions are rectified by Dr C O Carter in the chapter on genetics. The late Dr W C Marshall wrote a comprehensive account of infection of the nervous system and Neil Gordon contributes a useful chapter on learning disorders in which the section heading 'learning disabilities' and reference to the 'techniques of teaching' are printer's errors almost too good to be true.

The book is up to date. Each chapter is followed by an extensive list of references many of which are to papers published as

late as 1982. The absence of an account of ultrasound diagnosis is a serious omission from the chapter on neonatal neurology which will doubtless be corrected in future editions, and the subject of birth trauma is neglected. Mistakes appear to be few. The only obvious one I found was the statement that men with the Becker type of muscular dystrophy are liable to pass the gene to only half of their daughters.

Any book used primarily for reference depends heavily on its index. Unfortunately many of the random topics I chose to look up were not listed in the index and my major plea for future editions, of which there will surely be many, is for a revision and considerable extension of the index to include problems, signs, and symptoms as well as diagnosis.

Dr Brett and his colleagues have written a book of which they can be proud. It is undoubtedly the best single volume book on paediatric neurology currently available and I cannot imagine any paediatric department being long without it. I predict that in future years 'Brett' will be to paediatric neurology what for so many years 'Brain' has been to adult neurology.

D P ADDY

Pediatric Respiratory Disorders. Edited by E Nussbaum and S P Galant. Pp 282: \$38.50 hardback. New York: Grune and Stratton, 1984.

This multiauthor text does not live up to its claims to provide a comprehensive state of the art review of respiratory disease in childhood. Nor does it provide a 'clinical approach' to the subject. Equal weight is given, in a series of chapters by different authors, to common problems such as childhood asthma and exceptionally rare problems such as hypersensitivity pneumonitis. There is a certain amount of repetition, which is unfortunate in a rather slim volume. In particular, the first chapter on the epidemiology of acute respiratory tract infections is almost completely repeated in the section on lower respiratory tract infections. A survey of the contents page reveals that the editors have a very 'disease orientated' approach, rather than the more practical and clinically valuable 'problem orientated' approach.

There are several useful reviews. The section on bronchopulmonary dysplasia (although totally divorced from a general review of neonatal respiratory disease) is particularly good as are the chapters on cystic fibrosis, croup, and the practical guide to imaging of the respiratory system. I found the chapter on oxygen transport in prenatal and postnatal life particularly well written, although it is of virtually no practical value to the clinician.

It is disappointing to find that asthma, the disorder which presents the greatest workload to practical paediatricians, is the least well written. The section on the physiology of asthma is too compressed to be of help and contains many errors. The classification of asthma is simplistic with no attempt made to provide an understanding of the basic problem, airways hyperresponsiveness. The section on investigations provides no guidance to the place of chest radiology in the management of children with asthma, but in contrast goes to enormous detail on sputum tests.

Equally negligent is the failure to discuss the place of allergy tests in management, despite a detailed list of the types of tests which may be performed. It is, however, in the section on treatment of asthma that the worst deficiencies arise, demonstrating the out dated approach to management which still exists in the United States.

This book compares most unfavourably with the recent edition of *Respiratory Illness in Children* by Phelan, Landau, and Olinsky. The latter provides a much more clinically realistic and well argued guide to the management of respiratory disease. The text edited by Nussbaum and Galant is unlikely to help either the postgraduate working for a higher qualification or the expert in the field of paediatric respiratory disease.

M SILVERMAN

Introduction to Radiology in Clinical Pediatrics. By J O Haller and T L Sloos. Pp 206: £26.00 hardback. Chicago, London: Year Book Medical Publishers, 1984.

I have never seen a book that had so many

faults but was nevertheless so good. It is an introduction to paediatric radiology, and is absolutely crammed with practical information and illustrations. The trouble, of course, is that radiology, like cricket or skiing, cannot be learned from a book; there is no substitute for a visit to the radiology department. Despite criticisms of the book it is very readable, any non-radiologist would find it helpful, and I would recommend it particularly to paediatricians in training.

There are three problems. Firstly, the abnormalities described are not visible in about 15% of the illustrations. The rest are good, however, and the book is almost worth having for them alone. Secondly, it is irritating to find that many captions are questions, for example, 'Multiple abnormalities detected on ultrasound. What do you see?', with the answers in an appendix. Lastly, the book lacks practical advice on when and how to use radiographs. It describes the features of epiglottitis but neglects to mention that upsetting a child with epiglottitis by sending him to the x ray department may precipitate fatal respiratory obstruction. It describes the radiological features of pyloric stenosis but fails to mention how reliable or otherwise these are. It describes the radiological features of Hirschsprung's disease but does not say whether a barium enema is worth doing compared, for example, with a rectal biopsy.

T J DAVID

Diagnosis and Management of Respiratory Disorders in the Newborn. Edited by L Stern. Pp 231: \$29.95 hardback. Reading, Massachusetts, and London: Addison-Wesley, 1983.

This is a strange book. About the only thing that can be said about it with certainty is that it is not a textbook on *Diagnosis and Management of Respiratory Disorders in the Newborn*. It consists of a series of what for a better word one might call essays, albeit well referenced essays, on certain aspects of neonatal lung disease written by a very distinguished collection of authors, all of whom concentrate on pathophysiology and diagnosis rather than treatment. Some are very good, and I would highlight the chapters by Aranda and the Montreal team on neonatal apnoea (this one actually rates five stars); by Ehrencranz and Warshaw from Yale on chronic lung disease, in particular bronchopulmonary dysplasia; and by Fanaroff and Martin from Cleveland on non-pulmonary

causes of respiratory distress. Some essays wander far from the topic; that on viral pneumonia in the neonate—what a very good idea—spends a lot of time talking generally about how to diagnose virus infections and is therefore largely wasted, and that on asphyxial lung disease and meconium aspiration covers hypoxic-ischaemic encephalopathy. The shortest chapter is on respiratory distress syndrome and as such conveys little more about this major problem in neonatal care than might be gleaned from a good essay written by an MRCP candidate. There is nothing on transient tachypnoea, pulmonary haemorrhage, lung infection in ventilated babies, and perhaps most serious of all pneumothorax, interstitial emphysema, and other air leaks. Nowhere is treatment covered in anything other than the broadest general outline.

There is no point, therefore, in referring to this book for advice if you are struggling to ventilate a baby with severe respiratory distress syndrome who has developed bad interstitial emphysema. For the aficionada, however, some chapters are well worth a read.

N R C ROBERTON

Health for a change. By Sue Dowling. Pp 182: £3.95 paperback. London: Child Poverty Action Group, 1983.

This book describes a wide range of innovative schemes in preventive health care during pregnancy and early childhood. It is intended for a broad audience of planners, providers, and consumers of health services. The contents cover new initiatives from the health services, social services, education, and the voluntary sector as well as considering projects in which parents and children are active participants and are showing good examples of interdisciplinary work.

This is a very welcome publication. Many of the projects described are little known outside their own locality and there is much that others can learn from them. Many arose from impressive individual initiative and it is clear that they have had an uphill struggle for recognition and resources. Commonly, the projects have been cheap, effective, and run at field work level. Sadly too, Dr Dowling's investigation also showed that funding was often short term, ongoing support was lacking, and opportunities for evaluation were seldom available.

For those wishing to pursue further some of the 55 main projects described, the list of contacts and addresses at the end of each chapter will be most useful.

The book is extremely good value; I would certainly recommend it to child health doctors, general practitioners, and community nurses commending them to follow the initiatives reported.

L POLNAY

Selected Writings of Sir Denis Browne. Edited by H H Nixon, D Waterson, C A S Wink. Pp 154: £10.00 hardback. London: Trustees of the Sir Denis Browne Memorial Fund, 1983.

Sir Denis Browne has been widely recognised as the man who established paediatric surgery in England, and in particular in London where he lived for most of his professional career. As recorded by one of his lifelong colleagues, he was adventurous, rebellious, and difficult, but with an intellectual curiosity and an intense interest in technical problems. These various aspects are portrayed in the foreword to the book. After this there is a series of carefully edited extracts from Sir Denis's writings; with commendable brevity these illustrate his general approach. Ten pages follow on his mechanistic theory for the causation of congenital malformations and his early documentation of this is clearly presented.

The 8 papers selected for reproduction in full are on neonatal intestinal obstruction (1951), patent ductus arteriosus (1952), cleft palate and hare lip (1952), the operation for cleft palate (1932), the diagnosis of undescended testicle (1938), some congenital deformities of the rectum, anus, vagina, and urethra (1950), talipes (1950), and the pathology and classification of talipes (1959). A further selection of four of his writings completes the book. These are entitled, 'Another Place' recording the proceedings on his first visit to the House of Lords, the problem of Byron's lameness, a National Health Service, and 'rigid joints and rigid minds'.

The book will be of interest to all paediatricians interested in the development of malformations, to all paediatric surgeons (as D B are the best known initials in the specialty), and, because of his mechanistic interests, to orthopaedic surgeons, with whom his views did not always concur.

D G YOUNG