

largely irrelevant. The interested reader will find more information in the proceedings of two international meetings already held for neonatal thyroid screening.

There is a comprehensive review of sporadic congenital hypothyroidism by Foley. The contribution of Delange *et al* on transient hypothyroidism is extensive and contains useful messages. Sick, usually preterm infants and iodine deficiency seem to be the prerequisites for this syndrome. The list of possible drug and environmentally induced causes of neonatal hypothyroidism discussed by Walfish is most valuable. I was astounded to learn that in an area of severe iodine deficiency, such as Zaire, the incidence of congenital hypothyroidism is 500 times higher than in Europe and North America.

The final section on treatment is also a disappointment. Considerable effort is expended to illustrate how unreliable are the clinical symptoms and signs of congenital hypothyroidism—surely a fact that is fully appreciated and has been acted on for nearly 10 years now by the introduction of mass screening programmes. I was hoping to be educated on the psychological and neurological development in treated infants, but sadly this topic was discussed in a cursory manner. Perhaps this, more than any other part of the monograph, illustrated that the editors could have done better had they spread their net further to encompass other groups of workers who have made important contributions to the subject of congenital hypothyroidism. Paediatricians and endocrinologists working on neonatal hypothyroid screening programmes will find parts of this monograph valuable; I would not advocate it to a wider readership.

I A HUGHES

**Antimicrobial Therapy for Newborns.** 2nd ed. By G H McCracken and J D Nelson. Pp 234: \$24.50 hardback. New York: Grune and Stratton, 1983.

Antibiotics and treatment of infection in the newborn have moved a long way in five years. This is reflected in the updating of this well known book which contains a great deal of new information. The overall format has not changed and the book is compact and easily read. Half the book deals systematically with each antibiotic, with much personal data included in this gathering together of the published reports on the pharmacology, dosing, and side

effects of the drugs. The second half of the book covers rapid diagnosis and the treatment of the specific infections, for example meningitis. Finally there are short but well balanced discussions on difficult practical problems—the acquisition of resistant flora, the role (or lack of) of prophylactic antibodies, and the management of outbreaks of infection in a neonatal unit.

Inevitably the data cannot be up to date. Only those in the field can name, for instance, all the cephalosporins on trial in neonatal units in this country alone, and not all of these are mentioned in the book. The most recent papers quoted are from 1982 and the results of the latest collaborative trial comparing ampicillin and amikacin against moxalactam, are not yet known. Finally, one must remember that the book is for the American market and written about infections in America.

Nevertheless, in the field there are none better, and anyone working in neonatal care would do well to read this book, to learn about the advantages and disadvantages of the antibiotics available, and to ensure rational use in their neonatal unit.

J G BISSENDEN

**Asthma in Childhood.** By A D Milner. Pp 66: £1.50 paperback. Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone, 1984.

This small book crams an immense amount of concisely written information into its 66 pages and, writing from the admittedly inexperienced viewpoint of parent of a 9 year old daughter recently diagnosed as asthmatic, I would recommend it to the parents of any asthmatic child.

By means of a simple but effective question and answer format the author gives a clear general picture of both the symptoms and possible causes of asthma with a brief but helpful look at the highly complex subject of allergies. The various tests used to diagnose asthma are described, as are their purposes, and a comprehensive breakdown of the various drugs and courses of treatment currently available is given, together with helpful comments on possible side effects. The great majority of these drugs are remarkably safe and effective and can be used over long periods; however the author also includes a reassuring paragraph on the controlled occasional use of systemic steroids.

Unconventional methods of treatment such as homeopathy, herbal remedies,

and hypnosis are briefly touched on, as are the use of ionisers and humidifiers. Professor Milner is not in general convinced of their efficacy but recognises the fact that they have been known to prove useful in some cases. The importance of a calm, unworried attitude on the part of the parents is constantly stressed: the content of this book should do much to ensure that this attitude is entirely unforced and genuine.

SARAH GLEADE

**Disorders of the Respiratory Tract in Children.** 4th ed. By E L Kendig and V Chernick. Pp 968: £75.00 hardback. London: W B Saunders, 1983.

The previous edition of this book was published in 1977. In the last seven years there have been many changes in our approach to respiratory problems, particularly in the neonatal period, so this new edition is not before its time. The main format is unchanged, although there is new blood among the authors and nine new topics have been covered including pulmonary complications of gastro-oesophageal reflux, immotile cilia syndrome, Legionnaire's disease, and the sudden infant death syndrome. As before, the first section covers the anatomical and physiological development of the lung; examination, diagnostic and treatment procedures, lung function testing, and the effects of age. The next section, on respiratory intensive care, is relatively brief and followed by 90 pages on neonatal respiratory problems including congenital abnormalities. The viral and bacterial infections are grouped together. The fifth section comprises non-infective problems including asthma, emphysema, fibrosing alveolitis, and reflux. Diseases which also have effects outside the lung are discussed in the remaining third of the book.

Many of the sections are disappointing and have been dealt with far better in individual texts elsewhere. This is particularly true of the chapters on lung physiology, intensive and neonatal care, and the more common respiratory problems including asthma and cystic fibrosis. The book's strength lies in the fact that it is comprehensive and will be an invaluable reference source for those caring for children with obscure lung diseases. It is apparent from the bibliography that it has had a relatively long gestation; none of the references are for papers written after