

Book reviews

Chemical Pathology and the Sick Child. Edited by B E Clayton and J M Round. Pp 595: £32.50 hardback. Blackwell Scientific, 1984.

Paediatricians, always alert to the limited tolerance and blood volumes of their patients, are especially dependent upon a harmonious, effective relationship with colleagues in chemical pathology. Professor Clayton and Dr Round have produced a valuable book which fosters this liaison by providing clear guidance in the interface between clinical paediatricians and the ever expanding repertoire of biochemical investigation. Their selection of expert contributors spans the main subspecialty area, and reflects a successful integration of clinician and laboratory scientist.

The contents cover the full range of paediatrics; from the care of the low birthweight infant through systemic, endocrine, and metabolic areas to such specialised fields as the lipid disorders and the use of protein assays. Most chapters provide a brief review of clinical aspects before considering relevant biochemistry and the selection of appropriate investigations. The technical aspects are kept to a level which will appeal to a general paediatric readership. The newborn section makes effective use of the problem orientated approach and includes an unrivalled selection of tables giving reference ranges. The chapter dealing with the diagnosis of the mentally subnormal child provides a useful system for linking clinical signs to an appropriate investigative pathway. Some chapters, for example those on growth and diabetes, follow the pattern of conventional clinical textbooks but are nevertheless good reviews and will be useful to the laboratory based doctor who wishes to keep abreast of current practice. For a book which is otherwise so up to date, I would question the absence of the clonidine provocation test of growth hormone release.

There is an enormous amount of information packed into this medium sized book. Some of the pages will have to be read several times over but the effort will usually be well rewarded. As a short cut there is an abundance of subheadings, tables, and lists. The reader will certainly discover the relative value and reliability of tests ranging from the humble, but not

always straightforward, bilirubin concentration to those which are complex, expensive, and remote.

I am convinced that this book deserves a place alongside Forfar and Arneil or Nelson on the departmental bookshelf. Hopefully the goodwill and financial savings generated in the chemical pathology laboratory will induce them to buy their own copy!

DEREK JOHNSTON

Coping with Young Children. By J Douglas and N Richman. Pp 138: £1.75 paperback. Penguin Books, 1984.

This short inexpensive publication is refreshing in its direct down to earth approach to most of the common behavioural difficulties of preschool children. Few mothers will read this book without recognising their own child in some form. The authors deal with a wide range of topics including temper tantrums, breath holding attacks, sleeping difficulties, masturbation, and sibling rivalry. The format followed is one of a description of the particular problem, often illustrated by a short clinical case description. Practical and clear advice on management is then given—for example parents are advised to buy coats rather than all in one snow suits if attempting to toilet train their child in winter, on the grounds of faster access in emergencies! Examples of charts and diaries suitable for use with behaviour modification techniques are included.

The book comprises 138 pages and the discussion on individual topics is therefore brief. Particularly common problems such as headbanging, hyperactivity, and toilet training difficulties are referenced at the end and there is also an index.

This excellent publication will certainly find favour with parents but will also be useful for health visitors, nursery staff, and allied professionals.

K N PEARL

The Clinical Pathology of Pregnancy and the Newborn Infant. Edited by M N Cauchi, G L Gilbert, and J B Brown. Pp 373: £32.50 hardback. Edward Arnold, 1984.

The development of modern perinatal care

during the last two decades has been greatly helped by the rapid progress of clinical pathology. This book has very successfully brought together information on a multitude of pathological tests and diagnostic procedures, used by both obstetrician and neonatal paediatrician, which is normally found scattered through the appendices of numerous textbooks. It is, however, more than just a giant perinatal appendix in that crisp explanatory chapters accompany the facts and data.

The book begins with a section on the physiology of the pregnant woman and the newborn which usefully describes how functional and metabolic differences in pregnancy and the neonatal period may profoundly alter the interpretation of pathological tests and data. Following sections on the endocrinology of pregnancy and antenatal diagnosis there is a series of paired chapters on anaemia, coagulation disorders, and infections in mothers and newborn. The biochemistry of the newborn and haemolytic disease are comprehensively covered. Remaining chapters include a good review of perinatal immunology and the enigma of pre-eclampsia.

In style it combines the best of both British and American texts, but hails from Australia. It can be referred to briefly to find a normal value or suitable test, or read as a textbook. It is a must for every serious perinatologist and has already found a prominent place in our own intensive care unit.

R COOKE

Principles of Paediatric Pharmacology. By G M Maxwell. Pp 407: £22.50 hardback. Croom Helm, 1984.

This book is one of a number on the subject of paediatric pharmacology which we may expect to see published in the next few years. My forecast, based on some 'inside' information, has more than an even chance of proving correct. The subject remains somewhat in its infancy; our profession is realising at last that children are not 'little adults' in relation to drug treatment any more than in relation to disease problems and prevention; and publishing houses are ever keen to probe potentially rewarding market areas. Whether this book meets the needs of practising

paediatricians, general practitioners, and pharmacists can only be determined in time. My opinion is that it will—but only to a limited extent.

Its scope is broad and covers most of the background material one would expect—principles of drug action, drug handling processes, pharmacokinetics and pharmacodynamics, specific pharmacological principles relating to different periods of childhood from fetus to older child, ethical considerations, and clinical trials. The major part is devoted to a systematic approach to drugs detailing the relevant physiology and giving some information on use, actions, drug handling, and adverse effects.

So what are its limitations? These necessarily reflect my views of what the 'aimed for' readership wants rather than the extent by which the volume falls short of the author's aims. Problems inevitably arise in this field when pharmacology and therapeutics are separated. For the clinician, a combined approach is usually necessary and books aimed at covering one or the other field in isolation usually leave frustrating gaps in content and clinical relevance.

As the volume does not limit itself to principles of pharmacology, I would like to have seen a section on medication compliance and therapeutic drug monitoring included, but these are clearly therapeutic

aspects. In addition, although the physiological background descriptions are good, similar outlines on pathophysiology are omitted and it is sometimes difficult, therefore, to understand the exact role of the drugs described. The author, like others in pharmacology, has described the uses of some drugs but not of others; the action, absorption, distribution, elimination, and adverse effects are given for some drugs but not others. This inconsistency is found in most pharmacology works and unless such topics are specifically addressed according to headings or tables, it is likely to continue. In this context, and although not stated, some of the omissions in this book must relate to the still not inconsiderable gaps in our knowledge of the pharmacology of commonly used drugs in children.

I believe the author has achieved his aim of outlining principles of paediatric pharmacology but this occupies only a small part of the whole volume. The remainder reads like many other pharmacology texts that I was previously told to read and am now asked to read. The only difference this time is a paediatric slant to the subject.

GEORGE RYLANCE

Controversies in Pediatric Surgery. Edited by B F Brooks. Pp 232: \$35-00 hardback. University of Texas Press, 1984.

This book records the fourth annual Robert E Gross Symposium held in Houston, Texas. Forty three contributors from various parts of the United States plus the visiting lecturer Dr Harvey E Beardmore from Canada and one representative from the United Kingdom presented papers. As the title suggests, specific areas in which controversy continues to exist were selected for presentation and discussion at the meeting. These include undescended testis, appendicitis, necrotising enterocolitis, portal hypertension, pseudo-obstruction, anorectal agenesis, hydrocephalus, lymphoedema, and the ethical implications of fetal surgery.

The protagonists and antagonists of various forms of treatment for the above conditions present material and discuss the reasons for adoption of specific courses of action in treatment of these conditions. The contents are clearly presented and will interest not only surgeons but also medical paediatricians. Most will be able to find some evidence reinforcing their own preconceived ideas in each of these conditions, but the reader is forced to reappraise his own management of each.

The editor is to be congratulated on the speed of publication of this symposium and this early publication increases the book's value.

D G YOUNG