Book reviews

Pediatric Cardiology for Practitioners. By M K Park. Pp 332: £34.50 hardback. Year Book and Blackwell Scientific, 1984.

This relatively comprehensive textbook of paediatric cardiology is designed primarily for the non-cardiologist, intent on improving his skills in clinical diagnosis. The major emphasis has been placed on the effective use of history taking, physical examination, the electrocardiogram, and the chest radiograph. In addition there are general sections on the pathophysiology of the fetal and perinatal circulation, left to right shunts, obstructive and regurgitant lesions, and cyanotic heart disease. Also included are separate sections on specific congenital and acquired heart lesions, arrhythmias, heart disease in the neonate, congestive heart failure, systemic and pulmonary hypertension, and postoperative syndromes.

This is a very good book with excellent sections on physical examination, the electrocardiogram and arrhythmias, pathophysiology and the chest radiograph. For the most part the author has achieved his stated aims of providing a teaching manual for the non-cardiologist, although I believe there is a more logical approach to the diagnosis of the neonate and infant than that conveyed in this text. Somewhat surprisingly the important topic of the use of prostaglandin in neonates with duct dependent pulmonary or systemic blood flow is severely neglected and 'prostaglandin' does not appear in the index. In view of the fact that in many instances an infusion of prostaglandin E1 or E2 is initiated before a baby being admitted to a cardiac unit, this important area should have been dealt with fully in a book of this type. My overall impression is that the author sees few neonates and infants with major congenital heart disease.

The general style of the book is one of headings and lists which of necessity leads to oversimplification in many instances. The didactic approach, furthermore, does lead to some contentious statements and there are a few conditions which are inadequately covered.

It is interesting that there are no recent references from authors in the United Kingdom and herein lies the major problem for the would be British or European readers and, indeed, many in the United

States. The approach used in the nomenclature of congenital heart defects is very traditional and would be considered out of date by many cardiologists on both sides of the Atlantic. Certainly no self-respecting paediatric cardiologist in the United Kingdom would use some of the terms and classifications used in this text and for this reason some sections are potentially confusing and misleading to the non-cardiologist, for whom this book has been written.

MICHAEL RIGBY

Clinical Adolescent Medicine, Morbidity, and Mortality. Edited by R B Shearin and R L Wientzen. Pp 309: £28.00 hardback. G K Hall Medical Publishers, 1983.

This book has three parts, dealing with the clinical, reproductive, and psychosocial aspects of adolescent care respectively. The essential characteristics of growth, sexual maturation, and emotional change which form the physiological and psychological basis of adolescent medicine are not described. Without them the book seems to be incomplete and, at best, it can be called a compendium of articles about some conditions which occur in adolescence.

The first chapter is devoted to cardiovascular disease, a starting point that is neither explained nor justified. It consists of only 10 pages, three of them occupied by diagrams or references and it is inevitably too brief to be helpful.

After an inauspicious start the book improves a little and the second chapter on respiratory disease is a little more interesting. It starts with some brief, basic, unexceptionable information about asthma but with few specific references to adolescence, failing to mention important matters such as the effect of asthma on career choice. The reader would do better to consult a general medical text if he wants to know about asthma, but towards the end of the chapter there is a fairly good review of late cystic fibrosis.

A curious chapter on gastrointestinal disease follows in which oesophageal reflux occupies as much space as Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis together. Coeliac

disease does not get a mention, although there is a short section on acute pancreatitis, which has no special importance at adolescence. Hepatitis gets its own but satisfactory chapter.

An essay on immunological disease is partly concerned with adolescence and points out gaps in knowledge about this age group. It is followed by a chapter on neoplastic disease which gives the related incidence of the main types: malignancy. Finally, in the first section there is a hotch potch called 'Miscellaneous Disorders' in which acne, diabetes, headache, haematuria, bed wetting, obesity and several other matters are dealt with in less than 20 pages of text.

The section concerned with the reproductive aspects of adolescent medicine consists of three chapters on contraceptive pregnancy, and sexually transmitted disease. Their usefulness is limited by brevity but they are generally satisfactory. Tables of incidence apply to the United States as in other parts of the book.

Psychosocial problems are covered in disconnected essays and it seems that there was only minimal involvement of paediatricists or psychologists in their production. The chapter on accidents, the most important cause of mortality and morbidity in adolescence, is disappointing. It contains a six page table of 'Anticipatory guidance for accident prevention in adolescents' which also contains some loose, unsupported statements about growth and development. There is a chapter on alcohol use and abuse and this is followed by a helpful review of drugs of abuse which includes 55 up-to-date references.

In the chapter on mental health disorders, suicide, the third leading cause of death in adolescents, is accorded only a very brief mention. The same criticism applies to other important problems. Can mental health disorders be recognised adequately in a text of less than 200 pages?

The book ends with a chapter on the adolescent and the media and with a chapter on writing about the American juvenile justice system.

It seems to this reviewer that the book fails, partly because it tries to do too much in too short a space and partly because it does not confine itself solely to adolescent medicine.