

Book reviews

Neonatal and Pediatric Intensive Care. Edited by D Vidyasagar and A P Sarnaik. Pp 390: £49.50 hardback. PSG Publishing, 1985.

This book covers a wide range of intensive care problems in paediatrics, and only a relatively small part of it is heavily neonatal. There are 29 chapters, most of which discuss a bit of basic science before dealing with clinical disorders and their investigation and management. As befits a book on intensive care, aspects of management are usually dealt with in a pragmatic and detailed way. Inevitably, any reader will find things with which to take issue, but generally there is little of a vital nature to object to. Some chapters, such as those on fluid and electrolyte balance, acute circulatory failure, acute bleeding emergencies, and pharmacologic and pharmacokinetic principles are general and widely applicable. Others, such as those on hypothermia in cardiac surgery, bronchopulmonary dysplasia, and sickle cell disease are highly specific but are usually short chapters. The chapters on the ethical and legal issues of intensive care are very interesting but rather precisely applicable to America. Most paediatricians whose responsibilities from time to time include the management of critically ill children would like to read some of this book and have it to hand on the ward. Any junior paediatrician who used it as a practical manual would not go far wrong.

Most chapters are adequately, but not lavishly, referenced, and there may have been some editorial directive here. It is a pity that there was not also a directive to avoid indulgence in excessively complex phraseology and sentence construction.

P R F DEAR

Textbook of paediatrics. Edited by O P Thaman. Pp 901: Rs 96.00 hardback. New Delhi: Tata McGraw-Hill Co Ltd, 1984.

This is a disappointing volume from India that does not match its rivals in that country or the rest of the world. There are innumerable places in which emphasis and accuracy should be improved. There is a corrigenda list of 60 items between pages 17 and 512, but none for the next 400 pages. This does not inspire confidence.

The book fails to emphasise the main problems of children in the community in India. The accounts of weaning, nutritional dwarfism, cretinism due to iodine deficiency, and xerophthalmia are all trivial.

The text and references are not up to date. In many sections the most recent reference is to a textbook published some five to eight years earlier. There is no mention of copper as the possible cause of Indian childhood cirrhosis with the hopes for prevention and treatment, nor of aflatoxin poisoning. The account of hepatitis virus infection in infancy with possible relation to subsequent cirrhosis is also out

of date. The section on measles management states that 'cough linctus is required' and recommends large doses of vitamin C and B complex, but there is no comment on the importance of diet and nutrition. Reference to measles vaccine is inadequate and confusing, and there is no mention of the Indian work on the efficacy of measles vaccine, and that this is now a national priority. The immunisation schedule is sadly dated, still indicating the need for smallpox vaccination. The section on alimentary infections also contains many errors. In the management of diarrhoea, oral sugar electrolyte fluids are only mentioned after stool solidifiers, antispasmodics, and antibiotics. There is a list of 11 contraindications to oral treatment, which will confuse and undermine this fundamental measure. The recommendations about antimicrobial therapy are inappropriate and out of date. When discussing diarrhoea the author advocates 'In our circumstances . . . it is always of advantage to put the patient on one antibiotic', while for acute dysentery, where antibiotics are indicated, insoluble sulphonamides are given as the first treatment. Under dermatology, the treatment recommended for acne is both wrong and potentially dangerous.

Although the book is laid out systematically and contains a lot of valuable information, it cannot be recommended.

W A M CUTTING