Book reviews


This book is a compilation of personal approaches to the management of paediatric infectious disease and as such is not intended to be 'a textbook of infectious diseases'. An extensive range of illness is covered, from that encountered by any doctor dealing with children—for example, otitis media, acute diarrhoea, and croup—to that seen with any frequency only by the specialist—for example, tularaemia and Lyme disease.

There is a loose overall format but a great variance in the amount of general background information with which each author invests his writing. This may leave the reader glossing over the obvious on the one hand and skimming to standard works on the other to provide a base for the text.

This is a book more for the doctor with a certain minimum of experience than for the student. The editor sees the book as the synthesis of the contributor's past instruction, personal experience, and assessment of the medical publications. There are thus no references. It is always of interest to hear how others deal with clinical problems familiar to oneself, but I found the absolute absence of references somewhat frustrating when stimulated by a comment to look up the source.

Overall, the book makes interesting and enjoyable reading, but I am doubtful of its usefulness to the general British paediatrician. At times I could not help feeling that parts of it were lacking in substance, and because of the array of diseases covered too little is often said of too much.

S P CONWAY


To what extent should British paediatricians be concerned with developments in behavioural paediatrics? Is there any coherent 'behavioural pediatrics perspective' on child health behaviour as the title of this prolix volume suggests. Perhaps not, if we accept the view of the ultimate chapter's authors; to wit, it is 'an area ultimately defined by the activity of its participants.' Historically, the field of interest developed from three fairly distinct origins. Firstly, liaison psychiatry and child psychiatric theory and practice; secondly, psychosomatic medicine in adults; and thirdly, empirical research in experimental psychology, especially learning theory and principles of behaviour modification that derived from it. Contributions relevant to each of these aspects of behavioural paediatrics are included.

Intended to be a comprehensive assessment of the current state of knowledge about behavioural paediatrics, the book suffers from a lack of focus. For instance, a chapter on the philosophy of 'behavioural systems' rubs shoulders with an excellent review of the appropriate functions health education should play in schools. All in all, there are 26 chapters, but just one in three merits reading in depth. These include, besides that mentioned above, approaches to the control of childhood accidents, a critical review of campaigns to reduce smoking among adolescents, social and behavioural aspects of obesity, the primary prevention of hypertension, a biobehavioural analysis of the origins and management of childhood headache, problems in parental compliance with treatment, paediatric gastrointestinal disorders, strategies and future directions for research in behavioural paediatrics.

Besides difficulties in maintaining a coherent focus of content, the book suffers from failing clearly to define its potential readership. Paediatricians may well become exasperated by endless 'conceptual models' and discussion on the 'theoretical underpinning of ecological sub-systems.' A more than passing acquaintance with the use of behaviour modification techniques is advisable before tackling the contributions by behavioural scientists. Clinical psychologists and child psychiatrists involved in paediatric liaison work may find it more to their taste. In conclusion, this could have been an excellent book at half the length, highlighting issues the contemplation of which would benefit those employed in general or community paediatric practice.

DAVID SKUSE


This book from the Maudsley has taken up the task of critically examining whatever is truth and untruth and what is fact and fantasy in the world of hyperactivity. The result is a scholarly and objective book that leaves no stone unturned. While it is not light reading, there is an enormous amount of real information on a subject that has been surrounded by vagueness in definition and management.

GWILYN HOSKING


This 'case study teaching manual' is assembled by a radiologist and a paediatrician and presents imaging material from 100 cases arranged in systems. Each case has a list of up to five questions based usually on one or two images. Answers on the following pages of easy access (possibly too easy!) with concise information and often further explanatory images. The imaging examples cover all the usual modalities except autograms and nuclear magnetic resonance, and there seem to be no examples of intracardiac anomalies. The central nervous system is also probably under represented, with only four cases. Aspects not covered not only powers of radiological observation but also knowledge of relevant clinical matters as well as the choice of further imaging techniques to use. Some emphasis is laid on testing practical knowledge on performing radiological procedures—for example, barium enema for intussusception in case 19—and the choice of contrast material to use. Examination candidates need lists of differential diagnoses and this book has them; for example, conditions associated with hemihypertrophy, causes of osteoporosis, and causes of radial hypoplasia.

The answers are concise but some have further comments, though there are no references to read further. There is a good subject index.