Book reviews


A book that in its preface purports to present the essentials of normal and abnormal haemostasis in a practical concise manner for paediatricians should surely be welcomed, provided these laudable aims are satisfied. Unfortunately, this single author book fails to live up to expectations and will disappoint the practising paediatrician. The book is, in the main, descriptive rather than practical and accordingly loses much of its potential appeal.

There are six chapters. The first chapter defines the terms and describes mechanisms of haemostasis and fibrinolysis but is patchy and difficult for the non-specialist to follow. A potentially important contribution on the development of haemostasis in the fetus and newborn is restricted to one scanty paragraph, surely inadequate when compared to the detailed description given to the biochemistry of the vitamin K cycle.

The second chapter has a strong transatlantic bias in describing the clinical and laboratory evaluation of children with haemostatic defects. One or two of the flow charts could be useful for student teaching, but, in general, there is an implied lack of discrimination in investigation. Perhaps the tenor of this chapter is best illustrated by a detailed discussion of the need for routine preoperative haemostatic evaluation.

The four remaining chapters deal with the clinical manifestations and management of childhood haemorrhagic disorders, thrombotic disorders, and consumption coagulopathies. The sections on idiopathic thrombocytopenic purpura and haemophilia are two examples of topics given an interesting, personal, and practical perspective that much of the book disappointingly lacks. Even within these sections there are omissions. The haemophilia section contains just two short paragraphs on the acquired immune deficiency syndrome and fails to mention HTLV III/LAV or associated problems, surely unacceptable in a book published in 1985. I find it difficult to recommend this book in its current form. There is inadequate detail for haematologists or specialist paediatricians and the lack of practical perspective limits its suitability for general paediatricians. The one group who might conceivably benefit are doctors preparing for postgraduate examinations in paediatrics or haematology, but I feel this book offers little not already found in several well known general books on paediatric haematology.

J J LEWIS


This is a volume of 11 reviews by authors from the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom. As the editors have remarked each subject has been chosen either because it is controversial or because it is a topic about which there has been rapid progress in recent years.

The reviews range from those of general interest, such as resuscitation of the newborn and obstruction of the upper airways, to those of more specialist interest, such as regulation of respiratory muscles in children, high frequency ventilation, and cardiorespiratory monitoring in sudden infant death syndrome. The average reader will find much of the physiology discussed in these latter three chapters rather difficult. Other subjects covered are about the use of the fibroptic bronchoscope in infants, bronchopulmonary dysplasia, the lung in immunological disease, bronchial responsiveness, and allergy and infection in cystic fibrosis. The book concludes with a chapter on the outcome of respiratory disease in childhood. This successfully manages to document a massive quantity of information from population surveys and follow up studies in a well presented and digestible form.

Each author has himself made a considerable contribution to the field he discusses. The chapter on bronchoscopy is a particularly fascinating report; the findings in 613 infants (mean age 3-6 months) who have been bronchosoped are presented, an account of personal experience unlikely to be repeated.

Although the information is detailed, comprehensive, and extensively referenced it remains for the most part accessible. The standard of presentation is high throughout, a welcome feature of a multi-author collection. The editors are to be congratulated on the balance of their choice of topics. The book is intended primarily for neonatologists and general paediatricians, but many readers outside these categories will find subjects of interest to them.

SHEILA MCKENZIE


This ‘clinical update’ on the most important paediatric problem in the world begins with global statistics and an overview and ends with the World Health Organisation’s response. In between, chapters include accounts of diarrhoea pathogenesis, gut immunity, the physiological basis of oral rehydration therapy, and a highly practical chapter on bringing oral treatment for diarrhoea to those who need it most. Each of the 14 chapter authors writes from vast experience. Inevitably, there are variations in style and approach. For example, the chapters on viral diarrhoea and parasitic infections are straight fact filled microbiology, while that on bacterial diarrhoeas is largely a fascinating account of transmission by contaminated food and water. These different emphases appropriately reflect priorities. The repetition that is often a feature of multi-author books is largely avoided, though perhaps one really good account (rather than three) of the biochemistry of secretory diarrhoea would have sufficed.

Paediatricians in less developed countries struggling with the problem of chronic diarrhoea may be disappointed that the full account of lactose intolerance is not accompanied by fuller sections on cows’ milk and other protein intolerances and on management. The temptation to prescribe antidiarrhoeals and antibiotics in these children is strong, and the chapter on drug treatment is appropriately cautious and cautionary.

This is a readable and well referenced review of the last decade’s advances that should be available in the library to stimulate and inform our students and MRCP