Book reviews

Contemporary Issues in Fetal and Neonatal Medicine 1. Perinatal Anaesthesia. Edited by J W Scanlon. Pp 300: £32.50. Blackwell Scientific Publications, 1985.

The title of this book is unfortunate, as to the uninformed it may imply a treatise on obstetric and neonatal anaesthesia. Instead, it fills a lacuna in available medical textbooks and should be of interest to the many disciplines concerned with the perinatal period. Those who read it hopefully may gain insight into the recently advanced concepts that are exciting to all thinking obstetric anaesthetists who are so often the final common pathway in the production of the neonate.

The disadvantages of multi-authorship are illustrated by the impression that some chapters are not of the same high standard of presentation and information as others. The chapter on anaesthesia for high risk obstetrics reflects transatlantic practice and makes recommendations that are unacceptable to British obstetric anaesthetists—for example, the administration of 100% oxygen to a mother being anaesthetised for caesarean section would result in an unacceptably high incidence of awareness. I did not feel my neonatal colleagues would become reasonably informed about obstetric general anaesthesia from this chapter. By contrast the chapter on regional anaesthesia for labour and delivery is practical, informative, and succinct.

I was somewhat surprised that in relation to the management of the diabetic patient more emphasis is not made on the use of continuous insulin infusions that have revolutionised the intrapartum care of these patients.

The editor's choice of authors actively involved clinically at the 'cutting edge of any topic' is admirably illustrated in the chapter on maternal disease and anaesthesia. One has the strong impression that this author has actually clinically managed and thought about these conditions.

For those of us involved in the care of the pregnant patient the chapters on psychoteratology and the behavioural effects of drugs administered during pregnancy, maternal obstetric medication, and newborn behaviour make stimulating reading and are excellent reviews of the results of the many studies of perinatal events and behavioural outcome.

This book merits a place in hospital and departmental libraries for perusal by established clinicians involved and interested in understanding the physiology and subsequent management of the altered physiology in the perinatal period.

ROSEMARY MACDONALD

Diseases of Children. 5th edition. By H Jolly and M I Levene. Pp 694: £24.50 hardback. Blackwell Scientific Publications, 1985.

Since the first edition of this book appeared in 1964 an entire generation of paediatricians has benefited from Dr Jolly's teaching; it is a daunting task, so soon after his death, to attempt to review the latest edition that, despite the inclusion of Dr Levene as co-author, still reflects Jolly's personal practice and his didactic approach to teaching.

The format remains unchanged. After introductory chapters on history taking and on general aspects of child care and development, paediatric medicine is presented systematically, with separate chapters on speech disorders, skin diseases, accidents, and poisoning. A major strength remains the common sense approach to the handling of everyday paediatric problems, although the passage of more than two decades since the first edition is apparent in continuing overemphasis of the role of psychological factors in such disorders as asthma, constipation, and migraine, in the omission of recent developments such as neonatal thyroid screening and surgery for intrahepatic biliary atresia, and in the inclusion of obsolete terminology for chromosomal disorders. As always, the chapters on growth and development and on mental and physical handicap are a delight to read.

This book can be strongly recommended to medical students, to paediatric residents, and to vocational trainees for general practice. It will be of less value to paediatric registrars and clinical medical officers who will search in vain for answers to some fashionable parental anxieties; a book that tells us how to predict the adult height of aspiring ballet dancers could reasonably be expected to include some comment on the role of food additives in

hyperactivity, on the place of oligoantigenic diets in the investigation of colic, migraine, and behaviour disorders, and on the role of early exposure to wheat containing weaning foods in the pathogenesis of coeliac disease. Dr Levene will doubtless be correcting these and other omissions in the next edition; meantime I will continue to recommend Jolly to my more interested students and housemen.

GEORGE RUSSELL

Food for Thought: a Parent's Guide to Food Intolerance. By M K Minchin. 2nd ed. Pp 250: £3.95 paperback. Oxford University Press, 1986.

A seriously overstated case for allergy or intolerance is combined with a virulent attack on doctors, 'junk food', slow release pesticides, cigarette smoking, and pollution in this biased and unbalanced review. The advice given is inconsistent, unorthodox, at times bizarre, and on occasions frankly dangerous. To those attracted to the notion that all symptoms in childhood are due to allergy, this book will appeal.

T J DAVID

Paediatric Diagnostic Images. By C Gyll and N S Blake. Pp 232: £29.95 hardback. William Heinemann, 1986.

This book is divided into eight chapters and has been written by a superintendent radiographer from a children's hospital as well as a radiologist from a children's hospital. Just over 90% of the book is dedicated to radiology. One hundred pages of the book are dedicated to the skeleton, with an important section focusing on injuries of different sorts.

Chapters two through to seven discuss various different anatomical areas of the body, and each chapter begins with a radiographic description followed by what one may term the medical or radiological input. There is a great deal of very valuable information in the technical details of how to acquire adequate radiographs. The latter part of all these chapters fails to give a critical assessment of what is required and in certain areas is frankly misleading—for example, under stridor no mention is made of the crucial importance of a lateral view