

Book reviews

Self-injurious Behaviour: a collection of published papers on prevalence, causes, and treatment in people who are mentally handicapped or autistic. By G Murphy and B Wilson. Pp 455: £9.95 paperback, £19.95 hardback. BIMH, 1985.

This book has three sections dealing with epidemiology, aetiology, and treatment, each with an introduction by the authors. These introductions summarise the previously published papers that follow and amount to an expanded review of the published works. Of the list of references to the authors' own papers in the collection, half also appear as papers in the book.

The overall introduction defines self injurious behaviour as 'any behaviour, initiated by the individual, which directly results in physical harm to that individual'. This is contrasted with stereotypes that cause incidental injury. No mention is made of parasuicide or self mutilation, such as wrist cutting.

The subsections reflect the behavioural orientation of the authors. For example, there are only two papers under the heading 'Side effect of minor illness hypothesis', while there are seventeen under the sub-heading 'Behavioural treatments'. Psychiatric illness is not mentioned at all in the sections on aetiology and treatment, and social factors are not considered.

It is disappointing that the authors' introductions do little more than precis the papers. They do not adequately discuss the difficulties of epidemiology in relation to heterogeneous groups of intermittent behaviours. The discussion of 'diagnostic categories' is rather narrow.

They explain that the papers were chosen for a variety of reasons and are not an exhaustive review. I was surprised that the AABT Task Force paper¹ was not only omitted but not even mentioned.

The authors' sections are easily readable, with a few printing errors. The list of references is useful, but the index is not very detailed and is too similar to the list of contents. Most of the papers are useful, and the book as a whole is good value.

This book will be used as a review of the published reports and source of seminal papers by practitioners and trainees in most disciplines who work with mentally handicapped people. It should be available

in professional libraries in every district and in residential and day units dealing with mental handicap.

Reference

- 1 AABT Task Force. The treatment of self injurious behavior. *Behavior Therapy* 1982; 13:529-54.

N SIMPSON

Issues in the Care of Children with Chronic Illness. Edited by N Hobbs and J M Perrin. Pp 953: £72.25 hardback. Jossey-Bass Ltd, 1986.

This book of over 900 pages attempts to bring together all topics that relate to chronically ill children. Over 70 authors have contributed from disciplines that include paediatrics, education, sociology, nursing, psychology, and economics. The thread in common between these papers is the impact a chronically ill child makes on his family and on society. This book describes how North American society has responded over the last 20 years to provide a service to these children.

As the methods of health distribution and health funding and the educational systems have evolved differently in the United States British readers may find much that is not relevant to their practice. The cost of providing a service to children with handicaps of all sorts is discussed in detail and this comparative information may be of value to cost conscious paediatricians in all countries.

J J COGSWELL

The Lead Debate: The Environment, Toxicology and Child Health. Edited by R Lansdown and W Yule. Pp 286: £25.00 hardback; £14.95 paperback. Groom Helm, 1986.

The editors, both child psychologists, were members of the Lawther Committee, a Department of Health and Social Security Working Party that reported in 1980. This book is an attempt to explain and expand on that report and to include findings made in the intervening years. The basic chemistry, history, uses, distribution, measurement, and toxicology of lead are covered in

a manner comprehensible to the non-medical or non-scientific reader but nevertheless with enough detail to satisfy anybody with an interest in the topic, whatever his or her level of expertise.

D P ADDY

Ear, Nose and Throat Disorders in Children. Edited by J E Bordley, P E Brookhouser, and G F Tucker Jr. Pp 446. Raven Press, 1985.

This volume is designed as a compact reference book that will be useful to paediatricians, general practitioners, resident trainees in otolaryngology, paediatrics, and family practice, and medical students.

As a general paediatrician I found it both too much and too little.

There is an introductory chapter on the mucous membrane and the hazards to which it is exposed. The various topographical sections (ear, nose and sinuses, mouth and pharynx, neck, and larynx) are introduced by, generally, well illustrated accounts of developmental anatomy and physiology.

Communication and its disorders are comprehensively reviewed and this comprises 30% of the total book. Insight is given into the mysteries of electrocochleography, electronystagmography, and tangible reinforcement operant conditioning audiometry, not to mention the laboratory assessment of vestibular function by a 'computerised sinusoidally rotating chair that relies on slow moving harmonic rotation.' Although some of this tends to leave the uninitiated slightly giddy, highly technical matters are well explained and the section also contains practical guidance on the child with communication disorder.

For the general reader, the scientific basis of ear, nose, and throat disorders is more than adequately covered.

What was disappointing, however, was the lack, in certain areas, of detailed guidelines on clinical management. For instance, there is nothing on the technique of laryngoscopy, although intubation of the trachea (in neonatal asphyxia) is the commonest vital ear, nose, and throat intervention a paediatrician has to undertake. Foreign body occluding the supraglottic