

Book reviews

Advances in Pediatrics, Volume 33. Edited by LA Barness. Pp 415: £48.00 hardback. Year Book Medical Publishers Inc, 1986.

This book covers a series of diverse topics in which the editors feel there have been rapid changes in clinical and scientific areas of paediatrics. The result is 15 chapters of varying length, quality, and intensity ranging from the more esoteric 'dietary influences on neurotransmission' to the more down to earth 'α fetoprotein screening'. The chapters vary in their usefulness to the practicing paediatrician, necessarily having a North American bent, and on the whole do not yield easy answers to immediate practical questions.

Some chapters—for example those on cystinosis and chlamydial infections—are each a tour de force on the subject, and give historical reviews as well as full updates. There is a useful chapter on 'human teratogenicity' with balanced comment on the interpretative difficulties of animal studies, lists of established teratogens, and reference to up to date sources of information. The chapter on imaging procedures, by comparison, is low key with scant mention of the importance of antenatal ultrasound to paediatric practice, and no mention of the major advances in cardiac ultrasound. Other areas covered include 'vitamin E in neonatology', 'epilepsy and education', and 'inherited metabolic disease in the newborn'.

I am not convinced that the editors succeed in their aim to give us 'a refresher course in excitement'. They do, however, provide a useful book that deserves a place on our shelves to dip in to or for reference, but it is not light reading.

C S NELSON

From Birth to Five. A Study of the Health and Behaviour of Britain's Five Year Olds. Edited by NR Butler and J Golding. Pp 439: £24.95/\$37.50 hardback, £14.95/\$22.59 softback. Pergamon Press, 1986.

This impressive book distils the data obtained from a study of a national birth cohort. Many of the common childhood ailments and behaviour problems are included, with the addition of important chapters about the uptake and use of

preventive health services. Sources of possible bias in the data collection are fully discussed and most results are illustrated by bar charts. Associations between variables are clarified by a statistical technique, indirect standardisation, and expressed in terms of relative risk. Each chapter is a model of clarity and ends with a succinct summary of the conclusions.

This is not a dry statistical exercise; if the authors find conclusions distressing or disturbing, they tell us so. Those seeking ammunition with which to continue the assault on social inequalities in health will find more than enough here, but with clear guidance as to the reliability of each conclusion. For example, once the data were standardised for maternal smoking and ethnic group, the association between low birth weight and social class disappeared. Regional variations are explored: can it be that babies in the south east of England cried more, when they were in most respects more privileged than their peers in the rest of the country? Behaviour is in the eye of the beholder, a point not avoided by the authors.

The only criticism is that most of the children studied were leaving school by the time the book was published, and some will by now be starting their own families. Although we are a decade adrift, the book is an invaluable reference for anyone concerned with the health of British children. The editors and their team have produced a cohesive and comprehensive work which is a tribute not only to them, but to the health visitors and mothers who made it possible.

D B CUNDALL

Investigating Hearing in Children. By L Fisch. Pp 273: £27.50 hardback. Croom Helm Ltd, 1987.

Investigating Hearing in Children is a readable book with an emphasis on the practical aspects of assessment. The author describes techniques suited to testing the hearing of children of all ages and gives advice on the construction of premises suitable for this purpose.

Dr Fisch's sympathetic understanding of young children is very evident in the techniques he describes in great detail in

his book. I well remember visiting his assessment clinic some years ago and being impressed by his kindly approach to the children. He describes the physics of sound and hearing in an easily understandable manner.

Some of the techniques which have obviously served Dr Fisch well over the years have not worked too well for me personally. I have not, for example, been very successful in testing hearing for speech at six metres; I felt that I had often dropped out of the child's world at that distance. Dr Fisch's relative scepticism for complicated electronic gadgetry—the auditory response cradle, BSER, and more recently ECochG—is a breath of fresh air. He obviously feels that we have not reached the stage where a machine can be considered to be more reliable than painstaking careful observation of behavioural responses to a range of sound stimuli. He regards results of electronic tests as supportive or otherwise of more simple test results, but certainly not as infallible. I would recommend this book to community health doctors, general practitioners and paediatricians.

M YATES

Atlas of Fetal Sectional Anatomy With Ultrasound and Magnetic Resonance Imaging. By G Isaacson, MC Mintz, ES Crelin. Pp 184: DM 228 hardback. Springer Verlag, 1986.

The aim of this book is to provide anatomical references for ultrasound and nuclear magnetic resonance images of the fetus. This is achieved by placing photographs of gross anatomical sections alongside ultrasound images obtained from the fetus in utero and nuclear magnetic resonance images obtained on aborted fetuses. For each anatomical section there is also a detailed labelled diagram provided. The head, neck, thorax, and abdomen are shown in various sagittal, coronal, and axial sections, and there are separate chapters dealing with the limbs, the brain, and the heart. The majority of the scans feature 20 week fetus, but some show 24 week, 30 week, 34 week, and 38 week fetuses. The quality of the photographed anatomical sections is very good and the accompanying

labelled diagrams are clear. The quality of most of the nuclear magnetic resonance images is reasonable, but several of the ultrasound images are poor by modern standards.

The book has little to offer the paediatrician other than providing some idea of the sort of anatomical information which can be gained prenatally and on the basis of which he or she may be approached by an obstetric colleague for discussion and advice.

P R F DEAR

Urological Complications. Medical and Surgical, Adult and Pediatric. By FF Marshall. Pp 451: £62.00 hardback. Year Book Medical Publishers Inc, 1986.

Surgical complications are a lucrative business these days, not only for litigation lawyers but also, it seems, for medical publishers. During the last year the subject of surgical complications has been comprehensively covered by a number of new titles, the most recent of which is Dr Marshall's book which deals with adult and paediatric urology. As two thirds of the book is devoted to adult practice it is a relatively expensive purchase for specialists in paediatric urology.

There is, however, some common ground covered in the adult chapters, particularly those dealing with stone surgery, urinary diversion, and trauma. Dr Keith Light's excellent contribution on the problems of artificial sphincter surgery is enough to deter most paediatric urologists from embarking on this complex work.

Contributors to the paediatric section include some of the household names of American paediatric urology; for example, Dr Jeffs writes on bladder exstrophy, Dr Devine on hypospadias, and Dr Mitchell on urethral valves and reimplantation. Routine procedures, a fertile source of complications, have not been overlooked with chapters on orchidopexy and circumcision. There is even a chapter on the complications of antenatal intervention. This book, with its wealth of technical detail, will appeal to paediatric surgeons and urologists.

D F M THOMAS

My Name is Today. By D C Morley and H Lovel. Pp 359: £2.95 paperback. Macmillan Ltd, 1986.

This book commemorates the 40th anniversary of UNICEF and pleads the

cause of the most needy children in our world. Its stated purpose is to help the privileged to see and understand the problems of the underprivileged. Those concerned with children in any way must look through this book. It will make you think, smile, frown, and sometimes grimace.

The format is unusual and innovative; it is a book of ideas in pictures. There are 187 cartoons and graphs, drawn or modified by Mrs Gillian Oliver, interspersed with a dialogue between the authors, and followed by a long reading list. The theme is the health and wellbeing of the underprivileged children of the world.

Since the method is the cartoon, it is natural that there is a dependence on slogans and oversimplification of issues. One example appears in the section contrasting expenditure on armaments with that on education, homes, and health care (fig 91, p 157). 'The choice is ours'—declares the heading, but unfortunately it's not as simple as that!

There are numerous cartoons which are ideologically appealing but politically naive or not fully worked out. Some poetic licence is permissible for medicopolitical cartoonists whose purpose is to stimulate, and whose audience is not that of the academic journal. But when another objective is to inform, greater caution is needed when mixing statistical data from political and medical sources. Some figures and comments are over optimistic (fig 158 and p 299 'Many European mothers now suckle their infants for 1-3 years'), and others are difficult to believe (fig 54, p 94. Do the poor really have a lower percentage of overweight children than the economically elite? Which country?). Some figures are complicated and need more explanation (fig 60, p 102, and fig 173, p 322).

I had problems with the references and reading list. Sometimes there is a string of references in relation to a figure, and it is not clear which one is the source of the data. For example, there are nine references for fig 132. Occasionally I believe the most pertinent reference on the topic is not quoted. For example, the best reference to the 'pinch and scoop' method of measuring salt and sugar for oral rehydration (fig 140) is that of Ellerbrock (*Tropical Doctor* 1981;11:179-83). Fig 151 is about refrigerators for vaccines, but no reference is given to the three practical books on the subject from the Appropriate Health Resources and Technologies Action Group (AHRTAG).

This book is important, informative, infuriating, but challenging. The world is

full of inequalities, and paediatricians concerned to minimise the effects of this unfairness on the well being of children will receive both ideas and stimulation from this book.

WILLIAM A M CUTTING

Primary Pediatric Care. Edited by RA Hoekelman, S Blatman, SB Friedman, NM Nelson, HM Seidel. Pp 1776: £55.00 hardback. CV Mosby Co, 1987.

This weighty North American textbook has over 200 contributors and is aimed at those who look after children in a primary care setting. The expressed aim of the book is to provide a scientific basis to primary care and to focus on 'the determinants and reflections of health and disease' rather than adopting a more traditional pathophysiological approach.

The book is divided into nine parts. Part 1 opens with an 'over view of pediatric care' and includes an account of morbidity and mortality in the young. Part 2 deals with history taking and communication skills. Part 3, on principles of patient care, concentrates on nutrition, immunisation, screening for disease, and pharmacology. Part 4, entitled 'The reproductive process' considers reproductive physiology, contraception, factors which may adversely affect the fetus, perinatal medicine, and modern obstetric techniques. Part 5 is devoted to neonatal issues including parental support. Part 6, on psychosocial problems, includes such topics as the effect of television on the family, parental abuse by children, school health, and childhood and adolescent behavioural problems. Parts 7 and 8 are the largest sections of the book and deal, respectively, with 68 common presenting signs and symptoms each considered separately (including abdominal pain, cough, haematuria, and limp) and 87 specific clinical problems (including acne, diabetes, leukaemia, phimosis, and sudden infant death). The book concludes with details of managing emergencies.

This book is a fascinating source of information for those concerned with 'ambulatory pediatrics'. The editors' intention to focus on primary care is carried through in practice—for example, having dealt with accidents as the major cause of death in childhood, there is later an extensive section on accident prevention which even includes such details as 'safety rules when meeting a strange dog'.

The book is attractively laid out, has up to date references, and is on the whole very