

## Book reviews

**AIDS: Modern Concepts and Therapeutic Challenges.** Edited by S Broder. Pp 369: \$83.50 hardback. Marcel Dekker, 1987.

Papers and books on the acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) are proliferating at a rate comparable with that at which the disease is spreading. This authoritative book contains two introductory chapters, originating from the departments of Gallo and Montagnier, who first described the virus that causes AIDS. The duplication continues with two chapters on molecular biology, epidemiology, and Kaposi's sarcoma. The remainder of the chapters cover important areas such as the variety of clinical manifestations, pathology, psychosocial aspects, and treatment. There is a short but detailed chapter on paediatric AIDS.

Paediatricians in the United Kingdom have had little experience of patients with AIDS, and our involvement has so far been confined to fielding awkward questions from parents of babies on the neonatal unit and from students and junior staff. This complacent state of affairs is likely to change. The varied and non-specific presentation of paediatric AIDS causes problems in deciding which children to investigate. Where it is considered inappropriate to look for antibodies to human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) it is useful to have other 'markers' of infection. The chapter on paediatric AIDS by Parks and Scott offers guidance on these and many other relevant topics.

The rapidity with which knowledge and understanding of AIDS is expanding presents difficulties to book publishers. This book contains references from early 1986, yet already the name of the virus has changed from HTLV-3 to HIV, and EBV has been elucidated as the probable cause of the interstitial pneumonitis so characteristic of childhood AIDS. I recommend that paediatricians who wish to learn more about a fascinating disease and the virus that causes it should refer to this book. I suspect it is too detailed for most general

paediatricians to warrant the outlay of a personal copy.

F M POPE

**Two-Dimensional Echocardiography in Infants and Children.** By J P Lintermans. Pp 299: £75.75 (US\$ 114.00) hardback. Martinus Nijhoff, 1986.

The scope of this book, as the title suggests, is strictly limited to cross-sectional echocardiographic imaging, which is only one aspect of modern cardiac ultrasound. The text is intermittently in note form, in places the English is imperfect, and some of the nomenclature is outdated. The first chapter deals with 'left to right shunts' rather than with recognition of normal cardiac anatomy. Sequential analysis, on which modern echocardiographic assessment of congenital heart disease is based (and made both more understandable and digestible) is dealt with briefly and relegated to the last chapter. This illogical approach results in both text and illustrations being unnecessarily repetitive. The illustrations are on the whole of high quality and the chapters are adequately referenced, but overall this book cannot compete in either content or price with other currently available texts.

JOHN L GIBBS

**Emerging Perspectives on Assessment of Exceptional Children.** (Special Services in the Schools. Vol 2.) Edited by R E Bennett and C A Maher. Pp 193: \$24.95 hardback. The Haworth Press, 1986.

This multi-author American book is a state of the art description of assessment of children with learning difficulties. Assessment is an information gathering process to make decisions and plan interventions. The clear need to link assessment to treatment programmes and their evaluation and the limitations of the 'norm based' classical

psychometric techniques in this field have proved to be the stimuli for the type of assessment this book describes.

This book is easily read but most paediatricians will be happy to absorb the philosophy of approach rather than the detail. Precise definition of learning difficulties seems to be as elusive as that of 'special needs', and although the general principles of assessment apply to any child, most of the examples in this book are of children in 'normal' schools who have reading problems. There are several references to current American dilemmas in the field of 'special' education, particularly legal action as the stimulus to assessment and intervention for the individual child.

If a child is referred with reading problems 'classical' psychometric tests have a place, as discussed in chapters by Reschly and Lidz. They emphasise that examining how the child functions depends on environmental aspects, which must also be looked at systematically—that is, the classroom, teacher style, peers, and family. Spear and Sternberg discuss information processing as an assessment tool—for example, the difficulty with phoneme and syllable counting in children with reading problems. Such an approach must complement the normative assessment but does not directly suggest remediation. A test-teach-retest approach is described in a multi-author chapter on learning potential assessment. Two other chapters give reviews of the neuropsychological test battery approach (useful if used for asset rather than deficit intervention) and personality testing (interesting but currently peripheral to most remediation planning). Ted Hasselberg describes the development of computer systems for diagnosis—is redundancy around the corner? The chapter by Cecil Reynolds on the necessity for some mathematical understanding of the relationship between achievement and intelligence quotient scores is a timely reminder of the need to define what we actually mean by learning difficulty.

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