Book reviews

Pediatric Diagnosis. Interpretation of Symptoms and Signs in Different Age Periods. Morris Green. 4th edition. Pp 496: £39.50 hardback. W B Saunders, 1986.

Experienced paediatricians recognise that clinical diagnosis is a holistic process by which initial impressions of complaint, child, and family rapidly generate a probable explanation. Conscientious medical practice demands that this preliminary diagnosis be tested by the discipline of a full history, and examination supported, if warranted, by appropriate investigation. The excitement of paediatrics is that all this has to be related to the dynamics of development, and the changing spectrum of age related disorders. This book attempts to unravel and illuminate this diagnostic process. The first half is a systemic analysis of the clues provided by physical examination. It is a compendium of diagnostic possibilities for almost all conceivable signs, from scalp alopecia to macrodactyly of the large toe. The second half provides a problem orientated approach to regularly encountered complaints, both organic and behavioural. Both sections are set out clearly with liberal subheadings, and relevant, up to date references are included in the text.

The underlying concept of this book will not appeal to all readers, particularly those reared on more traditional texts encompassing diagnosis, natural history, and treatment. Its potential strength lies in providing a useful approach to taxing problems, and in provoking a wider differential diagnosis when faced with apparently straightforward situations. I took issue with the priority given within some of the lists of disorders; and the design of the book inevitably creates an artificial divide between presenting features, age, and the all important growth pattern of the child.

Young paediatricians preparing for examinations would benefit from delving through the book, but preferably after they have consolidated their factual knowledge. An aspiring candidate would have to be supremely confident to cope with the onslaught of syndromes and eponymous terms. The first diagnosis encountered on page one is the Coffin-Siris syndrome, immediately followed by a list of 22 largely exotic disorders. Less well prepared

readers might see some subtle logic in the comment on depression and anxiety in the following paragraph! The message is that this book deserves a place on your reserve reading list, and that it should lie alongside *Nelson* or *Forfar and Arneil*.

D I JOHNSTON

Paediatric Body CT. Alan Daneman. Pp 374: £135.00 hardback. Springer-Verlag, 1987.

Computed tomography (CT) has not made quite the same inroads into imaging in paediatrics as it has in adult medicine. The main reasons for this are that the resolution of ultrasound scans is better in small objects than in large objects whereas the resolution of computed tomography scans is virtually fixed; and secondly, the absence of intra-abdominal fat from children enhances the quality of ultrasound scans whereas it detracts from the clarity of CT scans. Add to these factors the different range of pathology encountered in children and it is clear that the role of CT in paediatrics cannot be extrapolated from adult practice, but needs special consideration.

From his experience at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto, Dr Daneman has produced an excellent review of the techniques, applications, and results of CT of the body in children. After a short general introduction the major anatomical areas are considered in consecutive chapters. Additional chapters discuss techniques for thoracic and abdominal examinations and for scans of the neck and extremities. An account of the CT features of the common pathologies in each anatomical area is prefaced in most chapters by a summary of the relevant anatomy and normal CT appearances.

The experience of the author and his colleagues is clearly very extensive, and it is difficult to pick out any major gaps in the range of pathology that is discussed and illustrated. There is a pleasing uniformity of style and an absence of overlap or contradiction between different chapters, qualities which clearly relate to the single

author format. The illustrations (over 300 in all) are generally of good quality, although rather oddly, a few have been printed in black and white instead of the usual white on black. Throughout the text the author places the use of CT in context with other imaging procedures, so that where ultrasound or scintigraphy is the preferred method (such as in the assessment of transplanted kidneys), he does not hesitate to say so. In summary, this is an excellent account of the use of CT in children and is thoroughly recommended.

P J ROBINSON

Children with Cancer. A Comprehensive Reference Guide for Parents. Jeanne Munro Bracken. Pp 407: £20 hardback. Oxford University Press, 1986.

As the title suggests this is a very detailed book written by the mother of a child with a solid tumour. It covers both the medical and psychological aspects of childhood malignancy and contains personal tips on how to help your child through diagnosis and treatment and how to cope as a family with the emotional problems. One chapter is devoted to the adolescent cancer patient. Although the child is a long term survivor, the author deals realistically throughout with the possibility of treatment being unsuccessful. She gives some practical advice on the dying child and what to do if another child attending the clinic dies.

An appendix simply outlines medical tests and a glossary explains commonly used medical terms. Not surprisingly, as the author is a reference librarian, there is a good bibliography at the end of each chapter.

The book is written by an American and its overall slant is biased towards American medicine and the problems thereof, some of which—for example, the financial ones—fortunately, are not really applicable in the United Kingdom. Nevertheless, it would be a helpful guide for parents who require further written information or for any lay person seeking a comprehensive book on childhood malignancy.

ROSEMARY SHANNON