which is now somewhat out of date because of the enormous rate of progress, and there is also speculation on the possibility of gene therapy. The editing, presentation, and illustrations are excellent. I enjoyed reading this overview of where mammalian genetics 'was at' in 1986.

DIAN DONNAI

Diagnosis and Management of Seizures in Children. Gregory L. Holmes. Pp 293. £26.95 hardback. Bailliere Tindall, 1987.

This single author book is volume 30 in the *Major Problems in Pediatrics* series and is well up to the standard of previous volumes in content and production. It is aimed primarily at the (North American) paediatrician and family practitioner but is equally appropriate for the British hospital or community paediatrician, whether established or in training. The author gives a comprehensive detailed account of the childhood epilepsies that could hardly be bettered. He is up to the minute in description, classification, and management. I found little to disagree with and many of my hobby horses are ridden with equal force and gusto. His accounts of the techniques and significance of electroencephalography and the pharmacology of anti-epileptic drugs are models of clarity with brevity. But he is equally at home with the clinical aspects and his straightforward descriptions, chapter by chapter, of non-epileptic episodic phenomena and of each of the childhood epilepsies are evidence of considerable clinical experience as well as a wide knowledge of the literature. His style is terse and easy to follow. There are many well constructed tables and diagrams that further clarify his meaning. The illustrations from electroencephalography are well chosen and well reproduced, which is often not the case in other publisher's texts. As a reference source it is excellent: the references are plentiful, well chosen and non-parochial, arranged in alphabetical order at the end of each chapter, and include some from 1985.

The European reader will inevitably compare this book with Niall O'Donohoe's *Epilepsies in Childhood* (2nd edition 1985),

which has established itself as the paediatrician's bible in the subject on this side of the Atlantic. This book is more prosaic and one misses O'Donohoe's occasional poetic asides, apt historical quotations, and penetrating insight into the psychosocial aspects of the subject. Holmes is uniformly down to earth, and he scores in his excellent handling of the basic scientific aspects. But both books are comprehensive, clear, readable, and up to date, and at a very similar price each is excellent value and ideally each paediatric department should have both volumes on their shelves.

BRIAN BOWER

Childhood Asthma. Pathophysiology and Treatment. Edited by David G Tinkelman, Constantine J Falliers, Charles K Naspitz. Pp 385. \$89.75 (USA/Canada), \$107.50 (all other countries) hardback. Marcel Dekker, 1987.

Childhood asthma is a disturbance of physiology brought about by a complex interaction of environmental influences on a genetic background. An understanding of reactive airways disease at this age requires a bringing together of knowledge from many disciplines including pathophysiology, biochemistry, and epidemiology as well as clinical diagnosis and treatment. This multiauthor book succeeds well in providing this broad based account of childhood asthma. There is a good balance between the basic sciences and clinical information, and there are lists of references to much recent work of importance.

The contributions on defence mechanisms of the lung and the role of inflammatory mediators in the regulation of airway calibre are particularly interesting. The British paediatrician may find less new information in the clinical chapters: for instance, the phrase 'not all that wheezes is asthma, however, almost all that wheezes is asthma' has a certain familiarity. The drug treatment of asthma has a North American flavour with as much discussion on theophyllines as β adrenergic agents and as much space devoted to ketotifen as sodium cromoglycate. There is much discussion on non-pharmacological approaches to the management of asthma (includ-

ing allergen control) but rather less on patient education and compliance. Although the index is poor (neither 'cough' nor 'eczema' is listed), this book is a very valuable contribution for all paediatricians dealing with childhood asthma.

J J COGSWELL

Atlas of Pediatric Physical Diagnosis. Edited by Basil J Zitelli and Holly W Davis. Pp 486. £65.00 hardback. Edward Arnold, 1987.

The title of this huge North American volume is misleading as it is a well illustrated textbook and not just a collection of illustrations. The text is extensive and extends well beyond the frontiers of diagnosis. Despite the high proportion of text, the large typeface and masses of mainly colour illustrations combine to give the book enormous visual appeal. The book is a pleasure to handle and easy to read. It is divided into 20 chapters covering most aspects of paediatrics, but there are no sections on oncology or malformation syndromes. The best sections are those on oral disorders, orthopaedics, and ear, nose, and throat. Those on gastroenterology, genetics and chromosomal disorders, and developmental paediatrics are especially weak. Not all sections lend themselves to photographs of patients. The chapter on cardiology contains numerous radiographs (especially barium swallows), and haematology is mainly illustrated by blood films.

Sadly too many illustrations are spoiled or obliterated by a pink or red hue, and several fail to show what is intended—for example, there is a nice colour illustration of a hypopigmented area of skin in a patient with tuberous sclerosis, the lesion becoming invisible on the matching picture taken under a Wood's light. Six pages describe the diagnosis and assessment of asthma in considerable detail but omit to mention measurement of the peak expiratory flow rate. Nurses and medical students will enjoy this book most; postgraduates are likely to find the sub-specialty sections the more useful and interesting.

T J DAVID