

Book reviews

The Genetics of Renal Tract Disorders. By M d'A Crawford. Pp 663: £65.00 hardback. Oxford University Press, 1988. ISBN 0-19-261147-X.

A single author text which provides a comprehensive review of a difficult subject is a rare find. The author is a senior clinical scientific officer and consultant clinical geneticist at Northwick Park Hospital and has brought together a wealth of information in a unique contribution to the literature.

In order to cater for clinicians, pathologists, and genetics staff there are introductory chapters on basic genetics and the structure and function of the renal tract. Other chapters provide extensive information on the genetics of both primary renal and urinary tract problems as well as detailing the renal involvement in a variety of uncommon syndromes and inherited metabolic diseases. There is a tendency to catalogue rather than synthesise the information but the text is extensively referenced and on some subjects there is more information than is available in specialist renal textbooks. The slight paucity of illustrations will not deter those who will use the text as a reference source. The book is sufficiently up to date to mention the recent advances with gene probes for conditions such as adult polycystic kidney disease, but those who require guidance on the implications of the 'new genetics' will have to turn to more recent review articles.

This book will remain a reference source for a long time to come and its cost will ensure that it will find its way onto many bookshelves including those of paediatric departments.

A R WATSON

Basic Adolescent Psychiatry. By D Steinberg. Pp 279: £25 hardback, £14.95 paperback. Blackwells Scientific Publications, 1987. ISBN 0-632-01824-0.

This book covers the classical psychiatry of adolescence in a competent and authoritative manner. After sections on classification and assessment the main psychiatric disorders of this age group are described

clearly and well, and there is a final chapter on general principles of management. The author is an experienced psychiatrist who writes from a good knowledge of the literature as well as from practical experience.

It is therefore something of a disappointment to realise that the book will probably not be found particularly useful by paediatricians dealing with adolescents with psychosocial aspects to their illnesses. There is a brief chapter on physical and psychosomatic problems, but it is sketchy and somewhat out of balance. To dedicate just a few lines each to common problems such as obesity and uncontrolled diabetes, but half a page to Addison-Schilders disease seems eccentric. There are some important omissions: in particular, there is virtually no discussion of the ways in which adolescent psychiatry can be integrated into adolescent medicine. It is unfortunate that the psychiatry of adolescence has become so separated from adolescent medicine for psychiatrists do, I believe, have much to contribute to an understanding of chronic disorders suffered by teenagers.

P J GRAHAM

Your Child Needs You: A Positive Approach To Down's Syndrome. By Joyce Mepsted. Pp 96: £5.96 paperback. Northcote House, 1988. ISBN 0-7463-0511-7.

This book by Joyce Mepsted, a special needs teacher, aims to provide information and positive and encouraging support for parents of children with Down's syndrome. After a foreword by Rex Brinkworth and a short introduction there are five main chapters, covering the stages from birth through to leaving school. Each chapter has a somewhat emotional title: 1, Fear and Prejudice; 2, Tears and Smiles; 3, Exploding the Myth; 4, The Door of Opportunity; and 5, The Ultimate Responsibility. There are clear subheadings to each section and at the end of the first four chapters there is a detailed check list covering the developmental steps of that age period, resources, useful activities, and a few other general notes of advice.

Mrs Mepsted often does not stay within this clear framework, however, and the text of the first two chapters particularly strays from the intended subject matter and becomes both repetitive and confusing. In part I think this is the result of her rather determinedly chatty style. Very 'positively helpful' advice can become positively cloying in nature, while in contrast some of the descriptions of problems are unnecessarily disheartening. The picture of a floppy, snuffly, semipermanently deaf baby with an enlarged and thickened tongue would most certainly fulfil the very fears and prejudices she is trying to avoid. There is insufficient advice about treatment and none about sometimes severe but correctable vision defects.

These criticisms certainly do not apply to the third chapter on starting school. Here the author is on firmer ground and gives a clear account of the range of provisions available under the 1981 Education Act and the procedures involved in statementing, but she does not specify the statutory ages when this can be requested. In the preceding chapter, clearer and more up to date details of financial allowances would be helpful.

The later sections provide useful but rather surprisingly limited advice about the prospects open to school leavers. In the United Kingdom of Mrs Thatcher in the late 1980s, however, perhaps it is best not to look further than the traditional adult centre or sheltered workshop for these young people, as even the most able of us may never obtain full employment.

B EDWARDS

Raising a Handicapped Child. By C Thompson. Pp 273: \$7.95 paperback. Balantine Books, 1986. ISBN 0-345-34819-2.

This book is designed to provide both advice and support for parents of handicapped children. It has been written with care and great sensitivity by an experienced paediatrician who is the director of the Center for Handicapped Children and Teenagers in San Francisco. Topics covered by the book include: the grieving process, dealing with family and friends, obtaining social and professional help,

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siblings, adolescence, therapy and medications, progressive disorders, and death. The author has adopted a positive approach throughout and this is reinforced by the chapters on 'How to help your child find some fun in life' and 'Success stories'.

Unfortunately, I do not think the book crosses the Atlantic well enough to be

generally recommended for parents in the United Kingdom. They would encounter some difficulties with terminology (shower parties), and major differences in both concepts (professional counselling, choosing a physician) and resources (20% of the book covers United States facilities for the handicapped while the 1981 Education act

is, of course, not covered). There is much in the book to be admired, however, and I think that paediatricians in the early stages of their careers would benefit from the insights it offers into the problems faced by the handicapped and their parents.

N J WILD