Book reviews

Perinatal medicine: Problems and Controversies. Edited by G C Di Renzo and D F Hawkins. Pp 237: \$56.50 hardback. Published by Cortina Verona but distributed worldwide (except Italy) by Raven Press, 1986. ISBN 88-85037-47-X.

Perinatal Medicine: Problems and Controversies is a collection of short monographs collected by Gian Carlo Di Renzo and Denis F Hawkins, and they are dedicated to the late Professor Montanari who held several prestigious chairs in obstetrics and gynaecology in Italy.

The editors have collected 35 articles and organised them in four sections: monitoring of pregnancy, assessment of fetal lung maturity, preterm labour, and psychosomatic factors in perinatal medicine. All the authors have an international reputation. Naturally the 'home team' is strongly represented, just under half being Italian. The other authors range over Europe and North America and are leaders in their fields.

I particularly like the brevity of the articles, the longest being 10 pages on fetal systemic function and behaviour (by J W Wladimiroff), which described the use of ultrasound to measure cardiac function, renal function, fetal breathing, and movement. Most articles were five to seven pages long and all had a short list of key references (10-15). The article on antenatal cardiotachography, fetal sonic stimulation, fetal electro-encephalography, fetal

transcutaneous oxygen tension, and subcutaneous oxygen electrode were all liberally illustrated with traces. In fact there is a wealth of wiggly lines.

As a neonatal paediatrician I found this a fascinating collection of monographs covering many of the esoteric aspects of fetal medicine and pregnancy. In one volume one has the oxytocin stress test re-evaluated (by E Ferrazzi, P Bozzetti, and G Pardi); Charles Rodeck looking at the fetus; and G Vecchietti and F Borruto telling us how to medically and surgically treat fetuses antenatally. There is also D V Walters explaining why the fetus and newborn baby do not drown in their own lung fluid; T K A B Eskes giving some scientific evidence that home delivery improves the cord blood gases; and R C Goodlin giving us his views on 'sex' in pregnancy.

I have two criticisms: the title should be prenatal and not perinatal, and secondly, the most recent reference quoted was 1983. This excellent multiauthor collection of monographs is now distinctly 'postmature'.

G M DURBIN

The Inherited Metabolic Diseases. By J B Holton. Pp 462: £50 hardback. Churchill Livingstone, 1987. ISBN 0-443-03195-9.

The editor has attempted an ambitious project with this volume. His aim is to

provide a comprehensive account of inborn errors of metabolism suitable to the needs of a wide range of readers, from the student or clinician in training on one hand to the research scientist on the other. In many ways the book is a success. It is well produced and presented. Unlike many multiauthor works it is very easy to read and its figures and diagrams are well chosen and clear. The authors of the individual chapters are recognised within the field and cover their subjects to a high standard.

While the content of the book is therefore satisfactory, unfortunately the subject is one in which rapid advances are being made and already some of the chapters are out of date. This is most noticeable when one reads the reference lists at the end of each chapter, for many the most recent references are already some three years old. Perhaps an addendum at the proof stage could have prevented this. This may not detract from the value of the book to the student or clinician in training, but will certainly limit its value to the research worker. In addition to this the peroxisomal disorders are hardly considered and I am sure that if the book were at the planning stage now a chapter on the inborn errors of this organelle would have been included. While hospital libraries will buy this volume the price of £50 may unfortunately deter the individual from purchase.

J E WRAITH