

## BOOK REVIEWS

**Handbook of Immunological Investigations in Children.** By J Graham Watson, A Graham Bird. (Pp 264; £25.00 paperback.) Butterworth Scientific Ltd, 1990. ISBN 0-7236-0973-X.

It is a problem in a rapidly advancing field such as immunology that for fear of being controversial or out of date authors fail to set down aspects of new research which are of great potential relevance to clinical practice for the benefit of practitioners. It is therefore not only timely but also courageous that two specialists should set down their personal clinical practice in a format designed to be accessible to the clinician with broader interests than immunology alone.

The book is a pocket sized manual which opens with a resume of basic immunology and the investigation of primary immunodeficiency, then covers the immunological aspects of investigation of diseases of each of the major organ systems in a series of 11 concise chapters and concludes with a very useful summary chapter of the major laboratory immunological investigations in clinical use, complete with paediatric normal ranges and types of specimens required. It is well referenced throughout to major easily accessible sources of further information, and the text is well supported by numerous figures and tables.

For the most part chapters are divided into sections on each major disease or group. This layout makes the book, as the title states, a handbook of investigations and not of diagnosis. A typical section opens with some comments on the immunopathogenesis of the condition, lists the investigations of potential relevance, and then enlarges on each of them in turn, discussing the value of the test and the likely significance of possible results. This makes access to information easy for the reader using the book as a quick reference, although a little familiarity with the contents, or use of the index, is necessary to know that, for example, asthma is dealt with under allergic disease rather than respiratory disorders and sudden infant death syndrome under respiratory disorders rather than infections. To a large extent the authors have overcome these inevitable classification problems by the judicious use of repetition and cross referencing.

Reasons a paediatrician may have for performing immunological investigations on a child vary between the extremes of elucidating the underlying defect in a rare and untreatable disorder and detecting a well defined abnormality which indicates an established treatment. In addition, most of us must at some time have experienced the frustration of receiving a result of an immunological test which no-one seems to be able to interpret! This book treads a useful middle path in providing a fairly comprehensive guide to the current repertoire of investigations while emphasising the diagnostic value of some and the uncertain significance of others. It will constitute a considerable improvement on relying on occasional review articles in clinical journals and the ancient edition of Roitt's *Essential*

*Immunology* most of us have lurking on our shelves from medical school days.

ADAM FINN

Lecturer in immunology and honorary senior registrar in paediatrics

**Pediatric Urology.** Edited by Keith W Ashcraft. (Pp 540; price not stated, hardback.) W B Saunders Company, 1990. ISBN 0-7216-2746-3.

'These are exciting times' states the opening sentence of Dr Ashcraft's editorial preface to this multi-author text. Few paediatric urologists or paediatric surgeons would disagree. Paediatric urology, always an interesting and rewarding specialty, has seen a wealth of innovation in recent years: prenatal diagnosis, reconstructive procedures with bowel and artificial sphincters, urinary diversion, laparoscopy, and shock wave lithotripsy all in the space of less than a decade. It is something of a disappointment, therefore, to find that the book itself often fails to convey the excitement of the pace of advance in paediatric urology.

The first few chapters deal with diagnosis, imaging, urodynamics, and the management of urinary infection. I would have liked to have seen an account of the embryological development of the urinary tract. A chapter on renal physiology as it applies to surgical practice would also have been welcome. Chapters 3 to 23 give a thorough account of the various surgical disorders of the genitourinary system in childhood. Some chapters are excellent—notably those on bladder exstrophy, persistent cloaca, urodynamics, and genitourinary tumours. I particularly enjoyed the chapter on paediatric renal transplantation. Dr Hardy Hendren's contribution on urinary undiversion is based on his unrivalled experience and follows his familiar format: surgical principles stated emphatically and the extensive use of illustrations. Here is a surgeon writing for surgeons. In contrast, the chapter on urolithiasis is disappointingly short on surgical detail, although the 'medical' aspects of stone formation are dealt with at length. Hypospadias and the undescended testis form a large part of paediatric urological practice, yet recent advances in these areas are hardly touched upon. Indeed these two chapters could have been written 10 years ago.

Although it has its weaknesses, overall the book emerges as a thorough and competent account of the genitourinary disorders of childhood. At present it has few rivals, with the hugely successful but outdated textbook by Innes Williams and Johnston currently undergoing extensive revision under new editorship.

Dedicated paediatric urologists (a small band in the United Kingdom, but more numerous in the United States and mainland Europe) may be disappointed, but for the paediatric surgeon or paediatrician, *Pediatric Urology* represents a reliable although unexciting source of reference.

D F M THOMAS

Consultant paediatric urologist

**Handbook of Pediatric Oncology.** Edited by Roberta A Gottlieb, Donald Pinkel. (Pp 370; £17.95 paperback.) Churchill Livingstone, 1989. ISBN 0-416-32169-9.

This concise yet comprehensive handbook will be a welcome addition to a paediatric oncology

ward's bookshelf—if it has not been squeezed into the registrar's pocket. In addition to the wealth of practical information regularly required by junior hospital staff caring for children with cancer, several chapters are also relevant to general paediatricians who share the care of these patients with specialist centres.

The book is divided into sections with further clear subdivisions. The approach to common malignancies is described in the first section with suggested investigations and staging criteria. Treatment protocols are wisely not discussed as they vary with time and among institutions, but the prognosis of tumours is not always easy to find.

Sections on pathological evaluation and therapeutic modalities follow, the latter including up to date chapters on bone marrow transplantation, immunotherapy, and colony stimulating factors. The longest section in the book deals with the complications of cancer and its treatment system by system. This is in some ways too comprehensive for a handbook and the detailed management of cardiac or renal failure could be found in any standard text book. Long term complications are briefly discussed together with psychosocial and family issues. The final section provides an excellent review of the role of genetics in childhood cancer.

The book is well indexed and most chapters are followed by a few key references and suggested further reading. Although published in America, there is little in this book which would not apply equally to patients this side of the Atlantic. Our oncology registrars will simply have to enlarge their pockets.

J A KOHLER

Senior lecturer in paediatric oncology

**The Psychosocial Effects of Bone Marrow Transplantation in Children.** By Carien Pot-Mees. (Pp 192; £14.50 paperback.) Eburon Publishers, 1989. ISBN 90-5166-074-X.

Bone marrow transplantation has revolutionised the treatment of a number of haematological, malignant, and genetic disorders. This improvement has not, however, been without cost and this book attempts to analyse the psychological response to the procedure in a group of children treated at Westminster Children's Hospital.

The innovative approach to treatment of many different disorders by bone marrow transplantation by the Westminster team makes them an ideal group to study the non-physical response to treatment.

The study design is comprehensive and includes a longitudinal assessment of bone marrow transplantation patients as well as a cross sectional comparison between the bone marrow transplantation patients and reference groups (children undergoing open heart surgery and normal, healthy, 'unstressed' children).

For many paediatricians the tests used will be unfamiliar, but the appendices help greatly with interpretation. The results will come as no surprise—an adverse psychosocial effect on children undergoing bone marrow transplantation. What should surprise is the scale of the psychological trauma—for example, 35% of the children exhibiting behavioural disturbance one year after bone marrow transplantation. It is for this reason that this book should be read by all professionals involved in the management of children on bone marrow

transplantation units. In addition, as there are implications for other children with chronic illness and those undergoing invasive hospital treatment the book deserves wider reading and I hope it will find its way on to the library shelves of other paediatric units.

J E WRAITH  
*Consultant paediatrician*

**Stable Isotopes in Paediatric Nutritional and Metabolic Research.** Edited by T E Chapman, R Berger, D Reijngourd, A Okken. (Pp 317; £40:00 hardback.) Intercept Limited, 1990. ISBN 0-946707-29-4.

Publications of the proceedings of symposia

are often unsatisfactory for two reasons. Firstly, the time taken for the book to appear in print often means that the work seems dated and secondly, the patchy quality of the chapters makes the total publication difficult to read and appreciate. This book does not have the first fault, but unfortunately is a good example of the problems associated with multiauthor texts, especially those considering a common topic.

The book follows a symposium of the same title held in Groningen in May 1989. It consists of 32 chapters considering the use of stable isotopes in three broad areas: the nutritional application, the study of intermediary metabolism, and the clinical application in patients with a range of gastrointestinal and metabolic disorders. This is a fair representa-

tion of the steady increasing interest in stable labelled tracers as a research tool.

The editors have clearly attempted to introduce a cohesive style, but the text remains repetitive and the subject matter would not be of interest to the majority of general paediatricians. Neonatologists may find interest in the first few chapters, which concern the study of growth and energy expenditure in infants of different age, size, and gestation. Paediatricians and scientists involved in the management of inherited metabolic disease will also find areas of interest, but the book as a whole I suspect will only be of value to the individuals attending the symposium as a reminder of the occasion.

J E WRAITH  
*Consultant paediatrician*

#### **Ultrasound in recurrent abdominal pain**

Ultrasound imaging provides a nice, clean, non-invasive, and apparently innocuous test. It is therefore very tempting to use it in children with recurrent abdominal pain 'for reassurance'— of patients, parents, and doctors, but does it tell us anything useful?

Canadian doctors (Shannon *et al*, *Pediatrics* 1990;86:35–8) reviewed the studies done on 65 children complaining of recurrent abdominal pain with no clinical indicator of its cause. Although 12 studies showed an abnormality, none was thought to be the cause of the pain and in some cases the discovery was considered to have done more harm than good. Most of the abnormalities were mild and involved either the kidneys or the female genital tract. None was considered to need treatment. In Canada an ultrasound study costs about \$C75.

A 'routine' ultrasound study is unlikely to produce an answer. I suspect that most of us will occasionally be pushed into requesting one in the interests of peace.

ARCHIVIST