evidence of anatomical or functional hyposplenism and of instituting measures such as antibiotic prophylaxis, vaccination against pneumococcal and *H influenzae* infection, and early treatment with antibiotics at the first sign of infection.

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1 Dyke MP, Martin RD, Berry PJ. Septicaemia and adrenal haemorrhage in congenital asplenia. *Arch Dis Child* 1991;66: 636-7.

Dr Langdon Down

SIR,—Peter Dunn's cameo is a helpful reminder of a distinguished physician.¹ However, Down published a good deal more than the article implies. In the 1887 Lettsomian lectures and a series of case studies Down described a diverse range of conditions. These included pseudohypertrophic muscular dystrophy ('by the aid of a harpoon I extracted specimens of the muscle from both gastrocnemii') of which he gives an accurate pathological description. He also describes patients with what is now called Asperger's syndrome, and children with Prader-Willi syndrome, fetal alcohol syndrome, hypothyroidism, dysgenesis of the corpus callosum and others.

There were some themes in which he took particular interest ranging from two articles on the mouth in people with mental retardation, the exaggerated criticism of traumatic childbirth as a cause of disability, the unsuitability of sitting schools for mentally handicapped children in hospitals for the mentally ill, and the relief experienced by parents when told that their children's disabilities predated the process of birth. He was also an advocate for full educational opportunities for women.

This material, first collected and published by the Medical Society of London in 1887, has been reprinted by MacKeith Press as the fifth in their excellent series of *Classics in Developmental Medicine*.²

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1 Dunn PM. Dr Langdon Down (1828-1896) and 'mongolism'. *Arch Dis Child* 1991;66:827-8.

2 Down JL. *On some of the mental affections of childhood and youth*. Oxford: MacKeith Press/Blackwell, 1990.

A new edition of what was Jelliffe's textbook of 'tropical paediatrics' is very welcome. Jelliffe in his foreword to the 4th edition talks of two main routes to be balanced in the effective promotion of child health, that is, specialisation, and child health and community. This book encompasses both routes. There are six sections each with its own editor and 15-20 contributors. The first three general sections cover maternal and child health, maternal and neonatal care, growth and development. Two disease specific sections follow, that is, infectious disease and diseases of systems. There is a final section on practical aids.

The contents contained everything it should. Although it is invidious to praise specific contributions, my favourites were: immunisation, protein energy malnutrition, and tuberculosis; other people might choose others. One problem I found was that some subjects were divided so that at times it was difficult to track down the relevant parts in the book, for example, gastroenteritis is dealt with in maternal and child health (oral rehydration services) and in infectious disease (diarrhoeal diseases). Nutritional supplementation programmes appear in the maternal and child health section, and nutritional rehabilitation is in the nutrition section of growth and development. In such a large book it was difficult to get an overall feel for the major medical causes of child mortality, and morbidity in the topics. The top three, that is, respiratory infection, diarrhoeal disease, and protein energy deficiency are all there and are dealt with effectively but get lost to some extent in the pith of the book. The remainder of the top 10 such as malaria, anaemia, tuberculosis, and so on are again dealt with well but their relative importance to overall child health is not clear. The introductory chapter might have set the scene better. Informative as it is, the chapter contains very selected mortality statistics but little breakdown by age and cause, and few measurements of morbidity. Perhaps my difficulties show I have become wedded to the medical model while the authors have escaped this straight jacket. The chapters/sections on cultural factors, delivery of individual services, the doctor as teacher, and child care in refugee situations are fascinating. They would not have been included in a more traditional approach and this book is much stronger as a result.

The editors say in their preface 'A balance has to be struck between the assembly of the information and instruction needed by the paediatrician in the reference centres of excellence, and the study and practice of management at the level of primary care'. The authors have achieved a commendable balance of emphasis in this very wide field.

BRIAN WHARTON
Rank professor of human nutrition

chapters on specific infections, namely measles, ehrlichiosis, and human herpes virus 6 (HHV-6) and four chapters addressing more general issues such as viral encephalitis, infected burns, skeletal infections, and the screening of immigrant children.

As the entire book emanates from US based authors, inevitably not all material presented is applicable to British or Australian paediatric practice. The authorship, as with previous volumes, comprises several recognised leaders in paediatric infectious disease.

True to its objective, this volume covers issues of contemporary concern with references right up to 1990. This is exemplified by the chapter on new developments in vaccines. It documents the change in US policy regarding the recommended age of immunisation against *H influenzae* type b. In March 1990, universal immunisation was recommended at 15 months of age instead of 18 months, but by October last year, this was again revised to recommend immunisation from 2 months of age, a change which was hinted at as pending in the text.

The infectious aetiology of several paediatric syndromes has been elucidated in recent years. This gratifying shift in understanding is reflected in the chapter on HHV-6, the cause of roseola infantum, also known rather appropriately as sixth disease.

The ongoing problems presented by pertussis and measles are expertly covered, though it is odd that the issue of pertussis should be covered again since it appeared in the previous volume. Also surprising was that in the authors' presentation of their contrasting views on the timing of licensure of acellular pertussis vaccines, one argued anecdotally regarding the reactogenicity of whole cell pertussis vaccine.

In the chapters on viral encephalitis and screening immigrant children, the authors have taken a practical approach in which they document their own strategies of management. The topics of infected burns and skeletal infections are dealt with ably and comprehensively.

The book is attractively presented and well referenced and apart from confusing staphylococcus with streptococcus in two tables dealing with paediatric skeletal infections, there are few typographical errors. It is of relevance to those practicing in the paediatric infectious disease field. Given that infection is the 'bread and butter' of general paediatric practice, most chapters in this volume will be appreciated by the general paediatrician who is keen to keep abreast of advances in this interesting field.

ROBERT BOOY
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Childhood Cancer: Understanding and Coping. By Henry Ekert. (Pp 185; \$16 paperback.) Gordon and Breach Science Publishers, 1989. ISBN 2-88124-356-8.

When a child has cancer what are the needs of those around him as regards information? First and foremost, of course, they need a sympathetic paediatric oncologist who has the time to sit down and explain the problem in detail. As there are so many factors that are peculiar to the individual child it may be misleading to turn to books for information without guidance.

Dr Ekert's book is intended for parents, relatives, and friends of children and adolescents with cancer. Of the 22 chapters, the first

Advances in Pediatric Infectious Diseases. Volume 6. By S Aronoff, W Hughes, S Kohl, W Speck, and E Wald. (Pp 200; £36.50 hardback.) Mosby Year Book, 1991. ISBN 0-8151-0308-5.

The editors of this series have again provided a useful and interesting update of important topics in paediatric infectious disease.

This volume covers new developments in vaccines against four major paediatric pathogens: *Haemophilus influenzae* type b, pertussis, rotavirus, and varicella. There are also three

BOOK REVIEWS

Diseases of Children in the Subtropics and Tropics. 4th Ed. Edited by P Stanfield, M Brueton, M Chan, M Parkin, and T Waterson. (Pp 1076; £90 hardback.) Edward Arnold, 1991. ISBN 0-340-50633-4.

nine deal with general topics such as aetiology, epidemiology, investigations, treatment both orthodox and unorthodox, and psychology; the next 13 are devoted to descriptions of specific conditions including the leukaemias. The result is a mini textbook that would serve well as an introduction to paediatric oncology for medical postgraduates.

Some parents, no doubt, will wish to have this degree of detail and more, but I think many may find the fare a little strong. The first chapter, for instance, begins with an explanation of the chemical structure of the double helix and the chapter on Wilms' tumour starts off 'This is a malignancy of primitive embryonal cells . . . associated with other congenital malformations such as marked asymmetry of one side of the body . . . (and) loss of genetic material on the short arm of chromosome 11'. Just as it takes two to fight or tango, it takes two sides of the body to be asymmetrical; that apart, I fear that some parents might find this kind of writing a touch confusing.

If this were a meal I would not recommend it to those disposed to the gout. It might be an apodagous epicure's delight but even he (or she) would need a first class head waiter to guide him through the courses.

D P ADDY
Consultant paediatrician

Paediatric Therapeutics. D Baltrop and M J Brueton. (Pp 457: hardback.) Butterworth-Heinemann, 1991. ISBN 0-7506-1344-0.

The editors of *Paediatric Therapeutics* intended to 'generate a source of practical information concerning mode of action, choice and use of drugs relevant to paediatric practice'. Instead they have compiled a collection of review articles with more emphasis on therapeutics than a standard paediatric textbook but with less guidance on recommended practice and drug dosage than certain popular residents' pocketbooks or the *British National Formulary*.

The first two chapters of pure science do not relate well to the rest of the book and are made difficult for the clinician by the inclusion of complex formulas and equations without their practical relevance being demonstrated. The important modifications of pharmacokinetics relating to age and development are disappointingly scanty and speculative, seemingly because there is a dearth of scientific data relevant to the growing individual. The main part of the volume comprises chapters on selected therapeutic topics, for example, 'management of infection', and 'corticosteroids' as well as a series of reviews of the major body systems and of paediatric specialty practice. For the generalist, 'cardiovascular disorders' and 'poisoning' are of most value as they combine a concise theoretical background with practical guidelines as to the use and dangers of drugs which have crept into the pharmacopeia in the years since many of us learnt the principles of pharmacology. Other chapters are not outstanding as the contributors have not kept to the remit of the title of the book. Tables composed of lists of causes are superfluous in a textbook of therapeutics and more simple charts relevant to management would have made the text more useful for reference. A large section is devoted to malignant disease; the treatment of leukaemia is described in two separate chapters without cross reference. Such duplication should have been avoided in

a book of this size especially as the authors recommend that the chemotherapy of cancer should be managed in specialised centres. Furthermore, several common paediatric controversies are hardly mentioned. The omission of the following topics is disappointing: firstly, a reasoned discussion of the dose and duration of courses of antibiotics—whether to increase dose with severity of infection, for example benzylpenicillin in meningococcal meningitis and in neonatal group B streptococcal sepsis; secondly, the management of acute asthma with regard to dose and duration of short courses of steroids; thirdly, the use or abuse of synthetic growth hormone; and lastly, and notably, the management of diabetes mellitus with regard to synthetic insulin and new techniques of administration.

Paediatric Therapeutics is a good source of reference with an extensive bibliography, although somewhat unbalanced and tedious to read from cover to cover. For libraries adequately stocked with standard paediatric texts it could be recommended as providing a 1990's update on a wide but selected range of paediatric topics with some emphasis on the scientific aspects of therapeutics.

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Child Health and Surveillance. By Judith Moreton and Aidan MacFarlane. (Pp 196; £10.95 paperback.) Blackwell Scientific Publications, 1991. ISBN 0-632-01965-4.

A quick browse through the acknowledgements gives some indication of the range of topics that this little book attempts to cover. There is information here on subjects as diverse as examination of the newborn, athlete's foot, and the poll tax.

The first chapter is on familiar ground and covers routine physical examination of infants and young children and outlines a screening schedule. Growth, puberty, and the screening for problems of vision and hearing are dealt with. There are detailed descriptions of how to examine for undescended testes and dislocated hips, and a table for 'quick' developmental assessment.

The chapter on health education has useful advice on the management of sudden infant death and accident prevention. The inclusion of a section on the Children Act is timely, and the information on child abuse is sound. I was less impressed by the section on antenatal and perinatal prevention of death and handicap where basic general principles are lost in a welter of information on birth frequencies. Immunisation and feeding are well covered in the chapter on health promotion. However, the chapter on disability and handicap is disappointing, especially considering the importance of community care in these areas. It is somewhat redeemed by the list of useful addresses and advice on benefits.

Chapter five, 'Diseases and other problems', is a mixed bag. Information on incubation and isolation times is always handy to have, but I was puzzled by the inclusion of a long list of over the counter medicines. Do the authors recommend them, or are they warning us? Enuresis, school phobia, acne, and lots more are addressed under the heading of developmental problems. There is a section on the school medical service but only a brief mention of the child with special needs.

The book ends with a chapter on com-

munity issues and discusses topics such as homelessness, debt, and divorce. There is also a concise and comprehensive guide to social welfare benefits. A section on cultural considerations emphasises the importance of communication, but gives no advice on how best to use the services of interpreters.

It is impossible to please all of the people all of the time, and in trying to do just that this book runs into problems. It would not be my choice of a vade-mecum for community paediatrics, but I think it will appeal to a wide audience. I must point out one error that caught my attention: on page 15 we are told that precocious puberty is more common in boys, which it is not.

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The New Genetics and Clinical Practice. 3rd Ed. By D J Weatherall. (Pp 376; £15 paperback.) Oxford University Press, 1991. ISBN 0-19-261905-5.

If you have ever wondered what walking, jumping, YACs, and clones have to do with clinical medicine, this is your book. Professor Weatherall's style is user friendly, and assumes limited knowledge of molecular genetics on the part of his readers. As such, this is an excellent book both for the interested physician/paediatrician and as an introductory text for those planning a career in clinical genetics.

The definition of 'the new genetics' is given as the study of inheritance at the molecular level, and Professor Weatherall, after a general introduction to this subject illustrates the potential power of this science to help in the understanding, treatment, and prevention of disease in practically every area of clinical practice. He does this, as in the previous editions, by selecting a few well understood examples (primarily, the haemoglobinopathies) and taking us step by step through the normal molecular biology and pathology involved. Later chapters are devoted to carrier detection, prenatal diagnosis, and the future prospects for rational treatments using gene therapy.

Rapid advances have been made in this field in the past few years, with the results that many more conditions are now recognised as having a significant genetic component to their aetiology. After explaining the techniques of 'reverse genetics', which have been successfully used in the past to localise, map, and sequence genes responsible for many single gene disorders (using cystic fibrosis and Duchenne muscular dystrophy as examples), their potential application to polygenic conditions, such as hypertension, diabetes, and schizophrenia, is discussed. A chapter on the exciting developments in the field of cancer genetics is also included.

It is difficult to fault this popular and established book. Minor typographical errors are irritating and avoidable (see table on page 5). The inclusion of a glossary might be a useful addition in future editions, as some of the terms used will be unfamiliar to many readers. Overall, though, the book is a gem—readable, affordable, and informative—and no one, having read it, can be left in any doubt about the potential implications of the genetic revolution which is currently taking place.

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