

ric data, in terms of facts per cubic centimetre, than any equivalent volume. This 12th edition has built on the proved worth of its predecessors by the addition of a chapter on resuscitation and by extensive refurbishment of other sections. It now covers most paediatric emergencies, infections and immunisation, neonatology, nutrition, fluid and electrolyte treatment, prescribing, investigations, developmental paediatrics and sundry other topics, all in the space of 300 pages. This is achieved by a condensed but careful layout on good white paper, though in places the print is so small as to tax the presbyopic. Nearly 30 contributors are listed—an impressive parade of the paediatric talent of Birmingham. The multiplicity of authors results in variations of approach, some favouring a more discursive style but only a few giving references. The scope of the book is vast but the depth is variable, reflecting the expertise and influence of each author. Some sections are rather sketchy, and others are more detailed and academic, sometimes well beyond the needs of the busy doctor in a general hospital.

A book that is such a 'Jack of all trades' cannot hope to master them all with equal success. The section on prescribing is particularly good with drug dosages set out with space and clarity. The sections on neonatology and developmental paediatrics, however, are so condensed that a person working in these areas would also need a more specialist text. Indeed one wonders if the cursory outline of developmental paediatrics sits happily in what is basically a 'hospital' book. The new house officer will look in vain for guidance on procedures, a common source of anxiety for the newcomer to paediatrics, but once the drip is up he or she can find a wealth of advice on what to put through it. The chapter on nutrition contains much useful data and good sense. The list of voluntary organisations and the advice on cot death add some humane leavening to an essentially clinical loaf. The brief section on burns could be improved by inclusion of a percentage chart for surface area and a firmer recommendation for analgesia. One important point that might be questioned is the definition of a glucose concentration of 1.5 mmol/l as the threshold for intervention in neonatal hypoglycaemia, which in the light of recent research is surely too low. There is also confused advice on pertussis immunisation together with an outdated schedule—the new one was introduced just as the book went to print.

Inevitably such a wide ranging book has points one can quibble over; however, the general standard of information and advice is excellent. The vade-mecum is a bargain at £13.95. Its portability is less relevant where white coats are not the fashion, but puts lady doctors with handbags at a definite advantage.

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**A Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Growth.** By John M H Buckler. (Pp 450; DM 360 hardback.) Springer-Verlag, 1990. ISBN 3-540-19569-6.

Elephants and turtles (seagoing, not teenage mutant) take longer to reach maturity than man. As a consequence, adolescence in these animals is not well documented. Even so, few of us have the courage, long term confidence, and dedication to document, in large numbers of children, the relatively shorter period

required to reach human maturity. Those that do succeed in such a task find their results providing reference data against which other individuals and other groups are matched. This book provides just such descriptive data on more than 300 children from secondary schools in Leeds, and a boys' public school in Berkshire, who were examined and measured three times a year between the ages of 10 and 18. The children were not randomly selected. The data are not complete in that prepubertal or late pubertal growth is missing for children who matured early or left school early. But these limitations are offset by the variety of anthropometric detail presented, the longitudinal nature of the study, and, most impressive of all, the fact that the measurements were all taken by one observer—the author.

The book is constructed as a thesis. The chapters present various aspects of the study and discuss the findings and then present the relevant tables and figures. Over 150 pages at the end of the book are devoted to computer printouts of the centile distributions of measurements for the different groups of children. The rest of the book contains more pages of figures and tables than text. Thus this is not a book from which to learn the basic facts of adolescent growth for the Membership but an essential reference work for paediatric libraries, those with auxological aspirations, and as an armchair book for the seasoned growth expert who can compare Buckler's findings with his or her own interpretations of adolescent growth.

The wealth of figures and tables may make the book sound heavy going but in fact it is easy to read. Interpretations of the anthropometric findings are expressed clearly and concisely and the figures are drawn in such a way that other growth curves can readily be matched against them.

The wide spectrum of anthropometric change presented in this book leaves an overwhelming impression of the variety in adolescent growth which inevitably becomes fudged in cross sectional studies. This impression is enhanced by the discussion comparing the Buckler children with other studies. What rules does nature follow to determine growth when individual variation is so great? This reader longed for the extra dimension of parental size in the study. Adolescents wishing to achieve an ideal size must, I suspect, do one thing they could never do: choose their parents wisely.

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**Childhood Epilepsies: Neuropsychological, Psychosocial and Intervention Aspects.** Edited by Bruce P Hermann and Michael Seidenberg. (Pp 264; £26.95 hardback.) John Wiley and Sons, 1989. ISBN 0-471-91270-0.

After an initial, orientating overview of childhood epilepsies (Dreifuss) this book comprises an interesting collection of chapters reviewing facets of the other side of epilepsy.

All the contributors are American apart from the authors of a rather familiar chapter on the effects of anticonvulsants on cognitive function (Cull and Trimble), and there is an essay by David Taylor demonstrating psychosocial components are no less important because they are difficult to measure.

The transatlantic differences in financial priorities revealed by some chapters are so great as to form their main impact and Britain

does not do well by the comparison. The chapter on clinical monitoring introduces the child clinical neuropsychologist as a primary resource (Berent and Sackellares). Another on school performance suggests regular standardised psychometric assessments of children with epilepsy (Seidenberg). While 'vocational and psychosocial interventions for older adolescents' (Fraser and Clemmons) indicates a major difference in the allocation of funding in response to public laws.

The government paper proposing regional epilepsy centres remains but a dream for most of Britain, a dream resurrected at several points by this book, particularly by a final description of the comprehensive multidisciplinary inpatient unit for children with epilepsy in Charlottesville (Santilli and Tonelson). 'Behavioural approaches to management' (Schotte and DuBois), concentrates on compliance and mentions low cost medication containers with built in alarms that signal the times at which doses are to be taken (for example, the Electric Pill Box Timer, Alaron Incorporated). Behavioural strategies for the reduction of seizure rate are covered in only three pages which is disappointing. 'Epilepsy and mental retardation' (Zielinski) reviews its topic competently but seems to have strayed into this neighbourhood from another book.

There is a concise and helpful review of surgical treatment (Wyler) and an updated account of the cognitive prognosis for children with uncomplicated epilepsy (Rodin). A masterly summary of information processing in petit mal epilepsy by Mirsky describes interictal and preburst deficits and was for me the highlight of the book. A middle collection of three chapters, largely reporting local work, was less rewarding.

Many British children with epilepsy get rather a bad deal despite the efforts of their physicians.

It is easy to become tolerant of services as they are. There are not many ideas in this book that could be implemented without more money. Even if money was available, one might not wish to follow all of the paths trodden here.

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**Developmental Speech Disorders.** Edited by Pamela Grunwell. (Pp 200; £19.95 hardback.) Churchill Livingstone, 1990. ISBN 0-443-03992-5.

Problems with speech and language development are the commonest problems encountered in the preschool population and for many will have long term implications. During the last 20 years there has been remarkable progress in applying the sciences of cognitive neuropsychology and linguistics to clinical practice. Our methods of looking at language development have during this time concentrated on the development of hierarchical linguistic subdivisions of language, for example semantics and phonology. It is likely that in the future there will be a greater concentration on how these different areas are linked and integrated, and the assumed psychological reality of those theoretical categories will be challenged, for example Bates *et al.*<sup>1</sup> Pamela Grunwell has edited this multi-author book for a range of professionals interested in language and speech problems with the aim of setting current clinical practice within a theoretical framework.