

non-dogmatic style with good references and suggestions for further reading. There are a number of helpful illustrations including some colour plates of normal and abnormal genital anatomy.

The first chapter describes the evaluation of the child with advice on how best to examine children and adolescents. This chapter does include techniques some would consider too invasive for 'routine' use. Particularly helpful are the details given on the variations in hymenal appearance. If we were all to use the terminology suggested here confusion would be avoided. I was happy to see my disbelief in the congenitally absent hymen supported with references. There are a total of 19 chapters with a number of appendixes. Two important early chapters consider 'ambiguous genitalia in the newborn' and 'vulvovaginal problems in the prepubertal child'. The latter chapter provides a commonsense approach to diagnosis and helpful suggestions on treatment. The attention paid to vulvovaginitis will be particularly welcome as this common troublesome symptom is frequently ignored or inadequately dealt with by traditional paediatric and gynaecological texts. The bulk of the remainder of the book focuses on puberty and adolescence (physiology as well as pathology) including a short but helpful chapter on the 'breast: examination and lesions'. Sexually transmitted diseases including human papillomavirus and HIV, contraception, and teenage pregnancy are all informatively discussed with up to date (1989) data and references.

Throughout the book care is taken to consider the psychosocial implications of the issues involved. Sexual abuse is kept in perspective. It is the topic of a separate chapter but pertinent reminders of its modes of presentation are found elsewhere.

Most of this book is of equal relevance to paediatricians and gynaecologists and one must agree with the authors that a dialogue is needed between the two specialities to ensure optimum care for children presenting with gynaecological symptoms. This book deserves to enjoy wide ownership throughout both paediatric and gynaecological worlds.

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Paediatric Formulary. 2nd Ed. Lewisham and North Southwark Health Authority, 1990. (Pp 163; £6 paperback.) Copies available from Mrs S Barnes, Pharmacy Department, Guy's Hospital, St Thomas Street, London SE1 9RT.

I was somewhat alarmed when this new edition of the *Paediatric Formulary* arrived in the post. In the three years since the first edition, the book has almost doubled in thickness. Can there really be so many new drugs that I have not heard about? How could the drug reps have let me down like this?

I was relieved to find that there were in fact only two dozen new drugs included, mostly cardiovascular or antimicrobial. The strength of this formulary has always been the notes accompanying drug dosages, with many now updated and more detailed, hence the increase in size. The tremendous clarity and ease of dosage calculation have been maintained.

The new sections at the back include an excellent one on paediatric immunisation and a useful list of proprietary names. The section on cardiopulmonary resuscitation is invaluable

and I have found the dosage schedule easy to use in an emergency.

I have few criticisms. A magnifying glass is required to read the nomograms for calculating surface areas. The section on parenteral nutrition is not too useful as every hospital has its own regimen. The inclusion of a section on analgesia and sedation would have been very handy.

What about its main rival from Alder Hey which has just appeared as a new fifth edition? The book from Liverpool can still fit in a file-fax and is also cheaper. Unfortunately due to its small size less information is given with no list of emergency drugs. My main worry, however, is the potential source of error in giving drug doses as total daily dose as all hospital drug charts require individual doses to be prescribed. I can claim neutrality but would always recommend the Guy's formulary.

Every paediatrician should carry this book and not rely completely on memory. Paediatric departments should make sure copies are freely available in the casualty department as well as on the ward for occasional paediatric prescribers. At £6 a copy it is a very cheap investment in these days of massive payouts by the courts.

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Infection in the Newborn. Edited by J de Louvois and D Harvey. (Pp 164; £39.50 hardback.) John Wiley and Sons Limited, 1990. ISBN 0-471-92679-5.

This book serves the important purpose of bringing together neonatal paediatricians and specialists in other areas who share an interest in perinatal infection. The coverage is wide ranging, from a stimulating first chapter on the cellular and biochemical pathology of the inflammatory response, and a chapter on post-mortem findings, the chapters on specific types of infection (nosocomial infection, listeria, group B streptococci, viruses in general, HIV, septicaemia, and meningitis), sections on laboratory tests and treatment possibilities, and finally maternal infection.

In neonatology there is an inevitable pre-occupation to treat at the earliest suspicion of infection. However, there are considerable unit to unit differences in details of practice in this difficult area. There is an attempt in this text to put local prejudices into a scientific and historical perspective. One specific problem is the accurate diagnosis of bacterial infection, and although laboratory diagnostic tests are not foolproof, it is suggested that combinations of them can be of use in rationalising the starting and stopping of antibiotics. Other contentious topics are aired including the choice between a combination of penicillin/aminoglycoside and a newer cephalosporin for early sepsis, and the place of routine lumbar puncture in 'infection screening'. The section on HIV, although it may age quickly, is a welcome review and practical guide. Going on to treatment, there is a detailed analysis of evidence for the efficacy of immunoglobulin therapy, and a mention of therapeutic manipulation colonising flora. However, the most exciting suggestion is that of 'inflammation modulating therapy', which could favourably alter the many secondary manifestations of infection.

There is some repetition of material on bacterial infection, and poor coverage of some topical issues in non-bacterial infection. For

example, the chapter on viruses avoids subjects such as rubella, cytomegalovirus, and hepatitis B, and describes in some detail respiratory syncytial virus infection, which is not strictly a neonatal concern.

Overall, this collection of essays provides a useful update and source of references on infection for the clinician caring for the newborn.

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Choosing For Children: Parent's Consent to Surgery. By Priscilla Alderson. (Pp 251; £6.99 paperback, £17.50 hardback.) Oxford University Press, 1990. ISBN 019 286115 8 (p/b), 019 217774 5 (h/b).

Parents, and even their children, are well educated today about matters of health and disease. Consequently they expect much from modern medicine, usually nothing short of complete cure for their illness. If this is denied them they tend to feel that something has gone wrong and somebody is to blame. The seeds for litigation are sown. These are good reasons for giving the very best in medical communications. The best reason, however, for rendering optimal communications is that the patients deserve it and none more so than children and their parents. In short, optimal communication is what the major part of this book is about, especially that which is needed when what could be life or death decisions are required for determining the type of treatment given to a child with congenital heart disease. The author presents the problems of effectiveness and efficiency in parent counselling and the bioethics of decisions based upon her study of paediatric cardiology and cardiac surgery in the Hospital for Sick Children, Great Ormond Street, and the Brompton Hospital in London. Messages are of general application. The first part of the book provides conversations with parents and with doctors of all ranks. The subject is consent for treatment, be it surgical, investigational, or neither. The matters are awareness, willingness, and trust between doctors and families.

Good communication before consent is recognised increasingly in the adult world but is required in much greater depth and complexity where children are concerned and the agonising, wrestling with information in part or whole, guilt, and worry are of a greater order. Readers of the book are likely to change their practice as a result of learning much from parents who have partaken of the experience and comments of the author who has received them. A distinguished cardiac surgeon wrote as much in the foreword and recommended that all surgeons involved in the taking of consent should read the book. Physicians who do not have to obtain consent nevertheless could learn much about talking with parents and children.

The final pages are devoted to 'bioethics', which is compared with wandering in a jungle; but help is at hand. The difficulties in the subject are shown. It is worth reading to understand this aspect of doctors' practice. Subjects like deontology, duties, rights, utilities, respect for rational persons or autonomous persons, beneficence, morality, and clear reasoning are dealt with—hardly bedtime reading.

The author states that 'ethical medicine combines justice with care, principled deci-

sions with the response to individual need'. Furthermore 'paediatrics leads the way in this kind of patient and family centred approach to medicine. It would be unfortunate if bioethics jeopardised this approach'. This is one good reason why children's doctors should know more about a subject upon which non-medical professional and lay people wax erudite.

I found that the recurring sandwich of comments, parents' and doctors' statements and anecdotes followed by comments to be somewhat tedious. Many of the parents' comments are to be expected. The matters dealt with are very important but the prolix style may deter busy clinicians from reading it unless the importance of the subject drives them to it. It is a brave introduction into a sphere that should become increasingly important in children's medicine.

O P GRAY

Neonatal Seizures. Edited by Claude G Wasterlain and Paul Vert. (Pp 318; \$118 hardback.) Raven Press, 1990. ISBN 0-88167-641-1.

At some stage most paediatricians will have experienced a sinking feeling when faced with a neonate who is apparently having a fit. It is easy simply to prescribe phenobarbitone and perform a battery of (often useless) tests.

However the questions whether the baby is actually having a fit, does the fit need treatment, why is it happening, what do I tell the parents, etc, are less simple. This book attempts to impart a logical view of the diagnosis and management of neonatal seizures. The book itself is the result of an international colloquium on neonatal seizures held in September 1987 and the list of contributors is impressive. The various authors have clearly been given the opportunity to bring their contributions up to date, an important fact in an area as constantly advancing as epilepsy. This is reflected in the references, which include several published in 1989.

The book is divided into five sections: clinical diagnosis, mechanisms of brain damage, cerebral blood flow and metabolism, ontogenesis of receptors and neurotransmitters, and pharmacology and therapeutics. The difficulty of diagnosis of neonatal seizures, particularly with respect to electroclinical correlation, is highlighted and consideration is given to aetiology, prognosis, and the pros and cons of treatment. Chapters are devoted to specific seizure syndromes including neonatal myoclonic encephalopathy and the benign neonatal seizures. The experimental sections are likely to prove heavy going for the non-neurologist and some prior knowledge would help in understanding the important human and animal work presented. However the effort devoted to reading these sections will be well

rewarded. Although the extent to which these mechanisms apply to human seizures is unclear, some knowledge of the potential mechanisms of seizure generation, propagation, and neuronal damage allows a rational approach to the management of neonatal seizures. The final section deals with treatment. The efficacy of the commonly used antiepileptic drugs, difficulties of drug administration in neonates, and the potentially damaging effects of these drugs are discussed. The last chapter recognises the variations in diagnostic and therapeutic attitudes towards neonatal seizures and is devoted to a survey of medical practice in a small number of leading institutions—this may be useful to some of those actively involved in the management of neonatal seizures.

In the end the book raises as many questions as it answers. In attempting to summarise the discussion from an international meeting this book compresses a large amount of information into a relatively small space occasionally leaving the reader feeling somewhat 'shell shocked'. However it addresses an important and poorly understood area and will be of interest to neonatologists, paediatric neurologists, and indeed to those treating epilepsy in children of any age. I would recommend having it on your shelf.

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