BOOK REVIEWS

Birth Defects Encyclopedia. Edited by Mary Louise Buyse. (Pp 1892; £150.00 hardback.) Blackwell Scientific Publications, 1990. ISBN 0-86542-088-2.

Any textbook which sets out to comprehensively cover the subject of birth defects is likely to be substantial, and this book is *huge!* The encyclopaedia is produced by the Centre for Birth Defects Information Inc, an independent non-profit making organisation, based in America. The resulting collaboration between international experts is presented in the form of succinct articles, arranged in alphabetical order, on over 2000 birth defects and syndromes.

Do not be put off by the size of this book—if you can pick it up, you will find it hard to put down. It has the same sort of appeal as Smith's *Recognizable Patterns of Human Malformation*, although it is less useful as a diagnostic aid as it contains no feature index. Essentially it serves a different function, providing an invaluable reference source once a diagnosis has been made. The format of the articles is excellent, and the inclusion of over 1700 black and white photographs gives it a satisfying visual content too. Each article title is followed by a list of alternative names by which the defect is also known (for example, for Noonan syndrome these include male Turner syndrome and Ullrich syndrome), as well as a list of conditions excluded by this diagnosis (for example, Klippel-Feil anomaly in the above example). This second list is particularly useful when considering a differential diagnosis. The major diagnostic criteria, clinical findings, and complications then follow. Where this book rises head and shoulders above its competitors is in the subsequent inclusion of details on aetiology, pathogenesis, treatment and prognosis, as well as information on sex ratios, possibilities for carrier detection and prenatal diagnosis, and a brief list of useful references. The address of the American support organisation is, for obvious reasons, less relevant for a British readership. One feature I particularly appreciated was the identification of what are now considered to be pejorative terms (for example, Angelman syndrome is now the preferred term for the condition previously known as 'the happy puppet syndrome'). It is impossible to select particular articles that are worthy of praise, but the sections on chromosomal abnormalities and individual heart defects are very informative and helpful.

The price of £150 may be prohibitive, but is good value, nevertheless. As a result, availability may be limited to that of a reference book in medical libraries, which is a pity. Personally, I think it would be of most value on the shelf of the paediatric office, for those occasions when a child with a rare condition, diagnosed at the regional referral centre, is admitted in the middle of the night with croup, or some such common ailment. How reassuring to be able to familiarise oneself with the essential facts within a minute or two. And just think how good it would look on the consultant ward round the next morning!

SUSAN E HOLDER
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Comprehensive Epileptology. Edited by Mogens Dam and Lennart Gram. (Pp 843; \$180 hardback.) Raven Press, 1991. ISBN 0-88167-646-2.

This book is for the obsessional bibliophile and therefore the specialist rather than the general paediatrician. The authors, both of them well known Danes in the field of epilepsy, have to a large extent achieved the stated aims of the book while leaving one or two important aspects of clinical practice untouched and therefore lacking.

The book has multiple contributors and international viewpoint. With this in mind authors from Asia, Africa, and Latin America present information on local aspects. Whereas this does have the affect of broadening one's psychosociological horizons and entertaining a wider differential diagnosis (for example, of parasites as a cause of epilepsy) there is little value here for the frontline British paediatrician.

Clinical pertinence was also somewhat lacking from other sections. The chapter on the Lennox Gastaut syndrome bore little reference to the educational and behavioural aspects that tend to assume such importance in the life of the families involved. The section on febrile seizures contained none of the recent debate which questions the value of the use of prophylactic anticonvulsant therapy. The sections on neuropsychology and the management of pseudoepileptic seizures are largely theoretical with no helpful considerations of a person's predicament and how it might be resolved.

I enjoyed the section on basic aspects including neurochemistry, neurophysiology, neuropathology, and genetics. The section on classification of epileptic syndromes emphasises the need for the reader to move away from blanket expressions such as, 'grand mal seizures', which are all too often used in clinical parlance without due thought to their meaning.

The chapters on electroencephalography might have considered the use of brain mapping, sphenoidal electrodes, and radiotelemetry and the chapter on neuroradiology for some reason is confined to temporal lobe epilepsy with no consideration of selection for computed tomography. However, the sections on magnetic resonance imaging, emission tomography, and magnetoencephalography all added useful resumes of relatively new techniques.

The medical treatment section offers nearly 200 pages of good reference material on drugs, including the newly arrived vigabatrin and lamotrigine in common clinical usage. The surgical treatment section offers an excellent review of the current state of the art; a reminder to paediatricians to consider surgery where partial seizures are resistant to medication. For some reason the section on organisational aspects considers special centres only whereas this might have been an opportunity to develop other models for community care incorporating medical, educational, and psychosocial aspects.

In these days of quality assurance in the National Health Service, with due emphasis being placed on the information doctors give their patients, I looked eagerly at the section on 'How to live with epilepsy'. This is a good overview but with the emphasis on the adult rather than the child. Doctors will, however, be able to draw good information for their patients from this and the sections dealing with fertility, pregnancy, and the risk of malformation. As we communicate with children

and their families the language we use is of great importance. I was pleased the term epileptic as a noun was not present in this book, though I do think, 'children with epilepsy' would have been better than 'epileptic children'. Nowhere, however, was there a section which advised doctors on how they might impart information on the subject to the newly diagnosed and how they might be helped to adapt psychologically. I would conclude by saying this is a book for those with a keen interest and for paediatricians in the frontline other shorter texts such as Niall O'Donahue's *The Childhood Epilepsies* would be better suited to their need.

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Child Development: Diagnosis and Assessment. K S Holt. (Pp 202; £15.95 paperback.) Butterworth-Heinemann, 1991. ISBN 0-7506-1035-2.

This comprehensive text provides an account of development as it progresses from the neonatal period to later childhood, including the adolescent age group. The author has drawn together material from various sources that contribute to present knowledge of the basis of development and of methods used in developmental assessment. In addition, there are a helpful set of references available at the end of each chapter. The observations carried out in developmental assessment vary, depending on the age of the child. There are clear descriptions and illustrations of methods used in testing children. In explaining the results attempts are made to draw attention to a wide range of 'normal values' that characterise development. These data are either tabulated or illustrated in a series of diagrams that may be used in clinical practice in assessing the extent of deviant development.

There are three main sections to this book dealing with the basis of development, normal development, and developmental paediatrics. The opening chapter guides the reader through definitions and terminology and leads to other chapters on neural maturation, some theories of child development, and integration of development in the first section of the book. We are then presented with a section on normal development containing a series of chapters on development extending from the neonatal period to the school years. The remaining section on developmental paediatrics has chapters on developmental diagnosis, a developmental approach to handicapped children, and measures of development. These highlight many procedures used as a guide to progress and how to assess the results of tests used by other professionals including psychologists, audiologists, and speech therapists.

The ground covered will be of interest to paediatricians and to doctors in training as undergraduates or postgraduates who wish to increase their understanding of development with a view to including developmental work in their clinical practice.

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Colour Textbook of Paediatric Dermatology. By William L Weston and Alfred T Lane. (Pp 300; £46 hardback.) Wolfe Publishing, 1991. ISBN 0-8151-9236-3.

The inside cover of this book displays a problem orientated differential diagnosis