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
Honorary senior registrar in
clinical genetics

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.

R W NEWTON
Consultant paediatric neurologist

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.

S W D'SOUZA
Consultant paediatrician

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

index enabling the general paediatrician to identify quickly most paediatric dermatological problems. This sets the scene for what proves to be quite a thorough book covering, in 20 chapters, dermatological aspects of paediatric practice, ranging from evaluation of the paediatric patient through to dermatopharmacology. In between there are concise, informative chapters on groups of disorders/clinical problems presented in an easily digestible but nevertheless comprehensive fashion.

The chapters on papulosquamous disorders and bullous diseases and mucocutaneous syndromes are particularly well written with excellent colour photographs of the various conditions throughout. Each of these chapters is subsectioned in a logical manner with brief outlines of the pathogenesis of the diseases, adding significantly both to the quality of the text as well as the reader's understanding of individual conditions. Also included in each chapter is a reasonable bibliography. On a personal note I would have liked to have seen more emphasis on the embryological development of the skin in the opening chapter. Furthermore, there are inevitable occasions when the requirement for more detail is not met.

In general, however, this book meets all its intended aims, including the specific needs of most clinicians involved in the primary care of children. It would make good reading for paediatricians in training as well as forming a useful part of the premembership reading schedule. The majority of paediatricians, I am sure, would be happy to have this book on their shelves and it would also be useful as a quick reference guide for those with particular interests in paediatric dermatology.

Most paediatric dermatology texts fail to inspire, however the authors in this case have managed to write a most enjoyable book!

PAUL BUSS
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Genetic Disorders of the Skin. Edited by Joseph C Alper. (Pp 378; £97 hardback.) Wolfe Publishing, 1991. ISBN 0-8151-0111-2.

This is a good multiauthor book on genetic disorders of the skin that sets out to describe many common and rare conditions which have a genetic basis. The conditions are grouped under useful headings such as hypopigmentation disorders, nail disorders, genetic hair disorders, and biochemical diseases. The presentation, natural history, inheritance, pathological findings, and treatment are given for most disorders described. There is also an attempt to include rare one off case reports, which is helpful to more specialised readers. There are useful tables and figures and it is well referenced. For a reference book it is relatively short and there are omissions. However, the conditions it does describe are covered fully. Some disorders feature in more than one chapter, which is probably necessary for completeness, but there are some discrepancies between the texts reflecting the different authors which is irritating. Dermatologists often use specialised terms to describe syndromes and clinical findings and a glossary would have been useful.

This book seems to be geared to the non-geneticist (which is a shame as geneticists badly need a good reference book on skin disorders). There are three chapters on general genetic principles describing chromosomes and cell division and a very good chapter on genetic counselling. As an introduction to gen-

etics they are very useful chapters, but my worry is that most busy clinicians do not read books from cover to cover but look up a specific disorder. It would have been more helpful to have had a genetic section written by a geneticist for every disease, rather than separate chapters. For example, X linked ichthyosis is described in good detail in the chapter on keratinising disorders but the genetic aspects are covered more fully in the chapter on genetic counselling which is not referenced in the index. In the main dermatological text the gene for X linked ichthyosis is described as being on the short arm of the X chromosome, whereas in the genetic text, it is revealed that the gene has been cloned, as indeed it has!

In addition, clinicians addressing the genetic issue of any disease need to know not only that a condition can be inherited as an autosomal recessive or dominant or X linked recessive, but need an appraisal of which is the most likely mode of inheritance and they want sibling and offspring recurrence risks. This area is not well covered. Many authors are out of date with their description of carrier and prenatal testing and some qualifying statement is needed to urge readers to check on the latest developments.

I think, however, this book covers a wide range of genetic conditions with dermatological features and would be a useful addition to any medical library.

KAREN TEMPLE
Consultant in clinical genetics

Tuberculosis in Children. Edited by Professor Vimlesh Seth. Publication of *Indian Pediatrics*. Official journal of the Indian Academy of Paediatrics, 1991. (Obtainable from: Cambridge Press, Kashmere Gate, Delhi 110006, India.)

Until computerised Medline facilities became readily accessible in our libraries the Indian journals of medicine and paediatrics were largely ignored by western physicians. Even now few British medical libraries stock Indian journals. Consequently a large and fascinating body of literature has remained undiscovered. In many areas of infectious disease the Indian clinical experience is vastly greater than in the west.

Nowhere is this more true than in the field of tuberculosis. In India the annual rate of infection is about 3% and 3.4 million children are estimated to have tuberculosis. Perhaps another 94 million children are at risk of infection. No western books on paediatrics have provided a comprehensive update on the subject of childhood tuberculosis, especially in the context of the developing world.

It is therefore to the credit of *Indian Pediatrics* that they have produced an updated compilation of papers in the form of a book *Tuberculosis in Children* edited by Professor Vimlesh Seth from the Division of Tuberculosis in the Department of Paediatrics at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences. Professor Seth herself has written most of the early chapters on epidemiology, diagnosis, immunopathogenesis, and the immunology of BCG vaccination and the tuberculin test. These chapters are readable, comprehensive, and well referenced. There have been many recent advances in mycobacterial immunology and it is to Professor Seth's credit that she has managed to be so concise. The chapters on imaging in childhood tuberculosis by Doctors S Mukhopadhyay and A K Gupta from the Department of Radiodiagnosis, All India Institute of Medical Sciences present a unique

collection of x ray films and computed tomograms which are of reasonable quality and reproduction considering the price of publication.

Perhaps the most interesting feature of the book is the chapter on neurotuberculosis by Professor P M Udani, the elder statesman of paediatric tuberculosis in India. He presents a summary of his vast clinical experience in Bombay and highlights the fascinating array of new clinical pictures and syndromes which have emerged over the last decade, largely because of the extensive coverage of children with BCG vaccination and the misuse of powerful antituberculous drugs. Consequently the clinical manifestations of neurotuberculosis have altered.

John Stanford of University College and Middlesex School of Medicine is one of only two non-Indian contributors and elegantly reviews the use of new tuberculin in studying the development of the immune response in children, the assessment of vaccine efficacy, and the value of skin tests in the assessment of immunotherapy.

This is an excellent book and the editorial staff of *Indian Pediatrics* deserve great credit for its rapid publication. If there is one criticism it is the absence of a review of community based strategies to improve the control of tuberculosis. The book is heavily clinically orientated. Experience of community based programmes to improve case detection, follow up, and monitoring of resistance patterns would have been valuable. At 125 rupees (\$15) this is a mandatory buy for any physician contemplating working in a developing country.

ANTHONY COSTELLO
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Pediatrics—An Approach to Independent Learning. 2nd Ed. Edited by C W Daeschner Jr and C J Richardson. (Pp 548; £22 hardback.) Churchill Livingstone, 1990. ISBN 0-443-08758-X.

Medical students choosing textbooks usually have to decide between a handbook containing brief summaries of common conditions, or a tome with detailed monographs on every rarity. In either case, they may well feel that what they read does not prepare them for their encounter with a patient in hospital or in the community. This book, which was designed as a companion to the clinical paediatric course at the University of Texas at Galveston, offers an original approach to teaching about patients rather than diseases.

The authors' objectives of teaching 'real life' paediatrics is reflected in their arrangement of chapters: forsaking the usual strategy of listing diseases by organ system, they describe a number of common clinical presentations, such as the child with fever, abdominal pain, or enlarged lymph nodes. The main text of each chapter is preceded by a statement of the objectives and a test of prerequisite scientific and clinical knowledge. Much emphasis is placed on assessment of indicators of illness severity. The student will learn how to decide which children may be treated at home, which need further investigation, and which are in 'pre-arrest status'. The text is profusely illustrated with short clinical histories and each chapter is followed by 10 to 20 multiple choice questions, often on patient management problems. One or two sections, such as the chapter on congenital heart disease, revert to a traditional didactic style, but in the main the problem orientated approach is maintained, and there is a consistency of style.