

BOOK REVIEWS

Paediatric Gastroenterology. Edited by J Navarro and J Schmitz. (Pp 547; £80 hardback.) Oxford Medical Publications, 1992. ISBN 0-19-261771-0.

The English recognise the French obsession with their digestive tracts only too well. It is perhaps not surprising therefore, that in addition to Gauloises, claret, and angry farmers, the French are even better known for having played a major part in establishing gastroenterology as an important and internationally recognised paediatric specialty. This book effectively summarises the theory and practice of paediatric gastroenterology in the Francophone world. It is probably through the unifying influence of organisations like the European Society for Paediatric Gastroenterology and Nutrition that the subject matter is so immediately accessible to British as well as to French readers.

On receipt of this book I turned to the coverage of my favourite, and the most underrated gastroenterological investigation in childhood, to find it described as a test of 'low reliability' and useful only 'as a test for getting oneself out of difficulty'. Perplexed by this affront of faecal chymotrypsin activity, I went on to read a book which provides remarkably complete coverage of paediatric gastroenterology and which usefully fills the gap between the shorter texts and the 'bibles'.

The initial chapters, which cover the development, physiology, and biochemistry of the gastrointestinal tract are superb, and as good as any I have read. They make an excellent introduction for anyone wishing to get to grips with the basic sciences relevant to the specialty. There follows a systematic description of clinical disorders and finally, sections dealing with investigations and nutritional support. Endoscopy is included, and there is a helpful collection of coloured photographs illustrating the endoscopic appearances of the more common lesions. Those readers who wish to have their prejudices confirmed about the preferred route for drug administration by the French, will not be disappointed to find a separate chapter devoted entirely to the rectum.

The relationship between paediatric gastroenterologists and surgeons is an essential and symbiotic one and it is therefore encouraging to see paediatric surgeons contributing so fruitfully to this book. The practice of tacking on one or two chapters about paediatric hepatology has been avoided, probably because hepatology is now a self respecting specialty in its own right. Certainly, 'Cinderella' is not the term which springs to my mind when thinking of its exponents.

The quality of translation is patchy and clinical presentations that are 'polymorphic' and stools, that are 'more or less discoloured' or 'glairy' left me feeling confused. This book has taken a time in arriving, presumably because of the need for translation, and unfortunately the references stop in the mid 1980s. Consequently autoimmune enteropathy and *Helicobacter pylori* are missing, and curiously, cows' milk sensitive colitis is not included.

These blemishes are minor, and all in all

this is a fitting tribute to French paediatric gastroenterology, and worth considering when a little more depth is required than is normally available in the briefer texts.

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Nutritional Triggers for Health and in Disease. Vol 67. World Review of Nutrition and Dietetics. Edited by A P Simopoulos. (Pp 202; £98.70 hardback.) S Karger, 1992. ISBN 3-8055-5265-3.

The title of this volume is only loosely related to the four review articles it contains. The articles are: taste, the neural basis for body wisdom, the piglet as a model animal for the study of digestion and absorption in milk fed human infants, complement systems in nutritional deficiency, and nutritional rickets in the tropics. The longest article, over 70 pages, is that on the piglet and is a mine of information on developmental anatomy, physiology, and developing gut microflora in both piglets and human infants. The reader may be surprised that when so much is written on alternatives to animals in research, an entertaining and relatively expensive animal, such as the pig, is encouraged as a research tool. Piglets are simple stomached omnivores and thus have many similarities with human infants but have many differences too. As the article states, some of these differences may not yet be documented in the scientific literature and could lead the unsuspecting research worker astray.

The article on rickets in the tropics debates the controversy over whether rickets occur in malnourished children. Active rickets is not common in children with severe protein energy malnutrition but is a common accompaniment of mild malnutrition. In tropical climates rickets may occur as a result of sunlight deficiency in dark skinned races whose women and children traditionally avoid exposure to the sun, but calcium deficiency may be as important in the development of bone disease in children in the tropics as vitamin D deficiency. Moreover biochemical and radiological findings can be misleading. Alkaline phosphatase levels are often normal and phosphate levels may or may not be low. Rickets occurring in association with severe protein energy malnutrition presents as 'atrophic rickets' with widening of the zone of provisional calcification and gross demineralisation of the shaft of the bones as the only radiological signs. Calcium supplementation as well as vitamin D replacement is essential.

The 'triggers' of the title may best refer to the chapter on taste as the message of the author is that taste sits at the interface between discrimination and digestion. Taste drives feeding reflexes and activities that mediate reward, and withdrawal activities leading to avoidance of toxins. Thus 'the first approximation of body wisdom is inherited through taste'.

These articles are styled as reviews with research cited but details of specific projects are not described in great detail. The review of complement systems in nutritional deficiency, possibly because of paucity of data on the subject, resembles an original paper with the author's own work presented in detail.

It is difficult to know to whom this book would appeal other than to those who have already made the commitment of buying the

previous 66 volumes of *World Review of Nutrition and Dietetics*. Readers interested in one topic will find much of interest but are unlikely to want to pay the cost of the whole book. Only nutritional polymaths or book-worms could be expected to devour all chapters with equal enthusiasm.

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Monographs in Clinical Pediatrics. No 5 Feeding Problems and Eating Disorders in Children and Adolescents. Edited by P J Cooper and Alan Stein. (Pp 205; £20 paperback.) Harwood Academic Publishers, 1992. ISBN 3-7186-5166-1.

This monograph forms part of a series tackling common paediatric problems and is designed to offer guidance for the investigation and management of the conditions described. This particular volume, edited by two psychiatrists, represents the collaborative work between psychiatrists and paediatricians, including paediatric gastroenterologists. This work aims to provide guidance to the paediatrician when confronted with the all too familiar problem of a young infant who is refusing to eat.

The chapters are divided into feeding problems of infants and preschool children, followed by a later section predominantly on anorexia nervosa and bulimia in adolescents, which forms a good half of the volume. It is this initial section covering the physiology, psychiatry, and management of the younger child who is refusing to eat, that is of particular use to the practising general paediatrician and covers areas previously learnt by both practical experience and information gleaned from books on child rearing! The psychiatric principles are precisely laid out and the protocols of management are easy to institute and would work very well in an outpatient setting. The second part of the book deals predominantly with anorexia and bulimia and is much more geared towards the paediatric psychiatrist. These conditions rarely present to the general paediatrician and then usually for a diagnostic workup, rather than management. However, this section does provide interesting reading and gives one great insight into the latest management and theories of anorexia which would be of great use to those dealing with young adolescents.

In general I found the first part of the book of great help and I feel it would be useful for all general paediatricians faced with the stubborn food refusing toddler group as well as those infants failing to thrive, principally because of poor intake, and for this reason, I felt that this book will be a valuable addition to any paediatric library.

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A Pocket Book of Social and Community Paediatrics. By Jo Sibert. (Pp 164; £9.95 paperback.) Edward Arnold, 1992. ISBN 0-340-54929-7.

The aim of the book is to provide a pocket sized guide for doctors and other health care professionals working with children, both in the community and in the hospital. Unfortunately so many aspects of community child health have been mentioned that in many, though not all, cases the need for brevity defeats the