Paediatric cardiology and neonatology are universally accepted as 'necessary' specialties within paediatrics; oncology has successfully pleaded its case, and few general paediatricians can deny the need for specialist help with some gastroenterological and endocrine problems. Yet the division of British paediatricians into subspecialties, especially in teaching centres, is not an unalloyed good; increasingly one encounters colleagues with substantial lacunae in their experience, because time spent in a special field, often chasing publications, leaves no time that can't be spent doing something else.

Rheumatology is a field in which terrifyingly sudden deterioration, such as occurs in a child in heart failure or after treatment for a malignancy, occurs rarely, so the need to have an expert close at hand is less pressing, but if there is any branch of medicine where the 'minute particulars' of additional benefit that a specialist provides are not questioned, it is the management of children with progressive disabling disease, of which the rheumatic disorders are painful examples.

As most children with such problems will continue to be managed by general paediatricians, there is a need for good textbooks aimed at them, and experience shows that if such books are large, they tend to remain unread. Paediatric rheumatology is not yet a field bristling with popular texts, although middle aged paediatricians remember Barbara Ansell's short, but authoritative, monograph with nostalgia; indeed there was a time when all one seemed to need to know about paediatric rheumatology was the name and telephone number of that truly extraordinary doctor.

Southwood and Malleson's book isn't like Ansell's at all; it has 16 experts, from the UK, USA, Canada, Australia, France and Belgium, in 314 pages of text, yet with little overlapping of chapter contents. The whole book can be read with profit by any general paediatrician, although not at one sitting, and the first chapter by Southwood and Woo from Birmingham and Harrow respectively on current knowledge regarding the aetiology and pathogenesis of juvenile chronic arthritis (JCA) sets the book off in sizzling style. If any paediatrician thinks that having JCA is little more than a nuisance he will be quickly disabused on reading the chapter by the book's editors on the impact of the disease on a child's life: out of approximately 100 waking hours available to a child, no less than 22 are lost as a direct result of having a chronic arthritis!

There is an entertaining section on the classification of the arthropathies of childhood by Prieur from Paris, and Petty from Vancouver, and a good, and necessarily long, account, from Laxer and Silverman from Toronto, of the drug treatment for JCA, and a short description of the current role of surgery in the same disease from Paris and Leuven. Niggles are rife: we have minds more on chondromalacia patellae, and many readers might wonder what the SEA symptom is; it is found neither in the text nor in the index, but appears in a hilarious figure entitled 'Enthesiopathic sites in 38 children with SEA syndrome', which places the iliac crest somewhat medial to the appendix, and the patella in the thighs.

This book contains an enormous amount of information — and wisdom — in a small space and at £27.50 is something of a bargain: the editors deserve congratulation.

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Growth is such a central part of child health practice that one would imagine that its assessment and interpretation would be organized to fit into the 'real world'. The Hall report suggested otherwise, stressing unnecessary anxiety provoking referrals as a particular problem rather than 'missed' treatable causes of abnormal growth. My own experience, from what I always imagine to be typical district general hospital paediatric practice, is that while such referrals of normal children are common it is regrettably also not unusual for the genuine problems to be sent up unnecessarily late.

Dr Buckler has written this manual to present the fundamentals of auxology to non-specialists evaluating children at the primary care level, and thus to raise awareness of whether and when specialist referral is needed. In addition he includes information on diagnostic approaches, treatment options, and outcomes in an attempt to demystify the subject.

This is a book of two halves, the first of which contains the theory while the second shows examples of conditions of disorders.

Theory begins with 'normal growth' — descriptions of use of centile charts, concentrating on velocity charts in particular. The difference between longitudinal and cross sectional data is well described. (Unfortunately the timing of publication means that the new Child Growth Foundation charts are not covered.) The when, what, and how of measurement follows. The suggested timing of screening - 11 separate occasions routinely during childhood, will raise some eyebrows! Comprehensive approach to growth assessment is completed by chapters on the significance of weight on skeletal age and puberty.

'Abnormal growth' is built up as a concept of non-pathological and pathological influences on the fundamentals which increase height or weight that is too fast or too slow. The features which ought to trigger specialist referral are then discussed.

The approach to investigation is deliberative basically. The tests most appropriate to primary care are considered with brief outlines only of those needing hospitalisation. The same emphasis applies to the conclusion of the theory half of the book which describes treatment.

The second half of the book is an illustration of disorders of growth and its treatment using 35 of Dr Buckler's own cases, each with a growth chart and photograph to accompany the text. A wide variety of relevant conditions are included.

The book is an easy read, written in a conversational style. Some of the graphs could have been sacrificed in favour of illustrating measuring tufts — a small point (or what I should say really is the least better drawings) used to depict pubertal staging.

I can recommend the book to paediatricians in family and community paediatrics as a general overview of growth problems and the options available for investigation and treatment. I am not certain that the basics are sufficiently basic for those with no postgraduate experience in pediatrics.

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Arch Dis Child: first published as 10.1136/adc.73.2.186-b on 1 August 1995. Downloaded from http://adc.bmj.com/ on September 23, 2023 by guest. Protected by copyright.
Infant nutrition has been the topic of many erudite dissertations over the millennia of physicians’ writing. Many of the earlier works have been little other than pontifications; now we are privy to much research and many recommendations, is the end product based on science or pontification by august committees and bodies?

Nutrition perforce covers all areas of medicine and social development. It is a vital aspect of many disease processes and can affect prognosis, as indicated in the chapter on renal disease. However, because applications of nutrition are protean, it can be difficult to pitch a general text at the right level. Should such a text merely educate general paediatricians as to the nutritional niceties of sometimes rare medical conditions or should the tome enter into sufficient detail to guide the specialist in the field? I am not clear whether this question has been considered in great detail by the editors, as the details of nutritional advice in many chapters vary from very detailed, as in renal disease, to generally broad based concepts, as in that on diabetes. The book competes in regard to nutritional treatment of children with, for example, *Diet for Sick Children* by Dorothy Francis.

Nutrition, like all aspects of medical and public health knowledge is changing rapidly. For example, the nutritional approach to diabetes is being re-examined so the recommendations of the diabetes chapter cannot reasonably be utilised. For general paediatricians, this is a disadvantage. If there are areas within a textbook that do not match with one’s own experience, it makes the non-specialist rather insecure in using advice given in other chapters in case it has also been superseded. This criticism of contemporaneity is an easy one to level but I feel should be considered by those editing a book which will be consulted for several years before being updated.

I believe a book such as this should give an overview of the nutritional principles attached to the treatment of various diseases. As such, the final section on community nutrition was informative, enjoyable, and pitched at the right level. The concept of adult disease having its origins in infancy is as old as medical philosophy but is an area of immense importance as interventions on a population wide basis can have significant influence on the health of a nation and the health burden of society. I enjoyed reading Dr Dennis Burkett’s seminal contributions on the role of fibre and his approach expanded into several other areas of adult illness. Again, however, we must remain cognisant of the rapidity with which nutritional fads waft through society and the speed with which recommendations for butter or against butter, etc, are splashed across screen and paper alike. I return, therefore, to my first paragraph; have we really moved on that much from pontification?

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