The Causes and Natural History of Cleft Lip and Palate


Little is known of the causation of cleft lip and palate, and in an attempt to unearth information the authors have delved into the histories of 169 children who were referred to Edinburgh over a period of nine years. Deformities are described in detail, and treatment is outlined by a plastic surgeon. Jaw anomalies are discussed by an orthodontist, and feeding difficulties are explored. This onerous task has been rewarding, and a great deal of knowledge has been brought to light, particularly with regard to cases where there is no family history of clefts. With these there was found a persistent story of difficult conception which extends to the maternal grandmothers. In contrast to the minority who had a family history, children without one were below average in intelligence and physique, and had more relatives with apparently unrelated deformities. There seems to be a family tendency for the fetus to be affected by a variety of adverse environmental factors. The work is well-produced and enlightening, and must be read by all who are interested in cleft lips and palates.

Assessment of Cerebral Palsied Children

Jessie Francis-Williams.

London: National Association for Mental Health. 1966. 2s. 6d.

This pamphlet sets out to survey the advances made in the assessment of cerebral palsied children between 1958 and 1964. It was commissioned by the Joint Committee of the University of London Extra-Mural Department and the National Association for Mental Health for the use of Medical Officers attending their Course on Mentally Subnormal Children.

The first half comprises a review of the literature and briefly outlines the recent advances in terminology, sensory defect, impaired intelligence and placement. The second half is concerned with the problems of assessment of cerebral palsied children. The shortcomings of the Stanford-Binet and Wechsler intelligence scales are outlined and useful supplementary assessment schemes (all American) including the Californian Picture Information Test and the Columbia Mental Maturity Scale. Literature concerning the clinical approach to the problem is also covered. An adequate list of references is appended.

On the whole this pamphlet makes dull reading although it fulfils its intention of presenting a review of the literature for the relevant period. No doubt it would serve as a useful adjunct to lectures or courses concerned with this problem, but it is doubtful if it will enjoy a wider appeal.

Recent Advances in the Study of Subnormality


This booklet provides a brief, clear, readable, comprehensive statement of recent advances in the study of subnormality. It starts with a discussion of definitions, prevalence, aetiology and prevention. The second chapter is concerned with measurement, further aspects of current research and treatment. The booklet was originally commissioned jointly by the University of London and by the National Association for Mental Health primarily for the use and instruction of Medical Officers attending courses on mentally subnormal children. It is a useful presentation for anyone wanting basic knowledge of the subject. It is rounded off with a helpful bibliography.

Depression and its Treatment


The author makes a painstaking analysis of the phenomena and aetiological factors in depressive illness from his own clinical viewpoint. He introduces a concept of two distinct types of depression — psychological and physiological — which he designates J (justified) and S (somatic). These correspond roughly to the traditionally accepted types of neurotic and endogenous depressions respectively but the author takes care, in his new classification, to emphasise the somatic aspects of the latter illness. He considers that within the S type depressions, a negative "functional state" has certainly often been the precipitating and behavioural activities organised at the hypothalamic level, and hypotheses about this region of the brain and its role in depressive illness. These views leave the controversy over the nature of depressive illness roughly where it was before.

The author clearly has a high regard for the use of physical and pharmacological methods of treatment. His critical decision as to the therapeutic effectiveness of the anti-depressive drugs is matched by his failure to show a real understanding of the role of psychotherapy in depressive illness. There is correspondingly little reference to the role of aggression and the inability to express angry feelings as a basis of depressive illness. These deficiencies are the weakest part of the book which is otherwise readable, probably persuasive for the uninitiated and undoubtedly provocative for others.

NEW EDITIONS

A Short Textbook of Haematology


The title of this book indicates its scope which lies between the sometimes inadequate accounts of haematology given in comprehensive textbooks of medicine and the major specialist works. The author is a physician and the main emphasis throughout is clinical but each chapter is introduced by a short account of relevant physiology or pathology. No technical details of laboratory tests are included but in the various chapters results of laboratory and isotope investigations are described.

This new edition is similar to the first edition of four