Book Reviews

Anesthesia in Obstetrics: Maternal, Fetal, and Neonatal Aspects. Second edition, George A. Albright, James E. Ferguson, Thomas H. Joyce and David K. Stevenson. Pp. xviii + 622, illustrated. Butterworths, Boston, London, Durban, Singapore, Sydney, Toronto, Wellington, 1986. £65.00.

This excellent book is much more than an updated version of the first edition. Many new authors have been recruited to give broader coverage and deeper discussion in the three fields of anaesthesia, obstetrics and neonatology. A vast quantity of information is presented with clear writing, consistency and minimal repetition, enlivened by penetrating comments of invited experts who sometimes totally disagree with points in the text. Not all the techniques and agents are common in the UK, but the American authors quote widely from the world literature and accurately report on current British practice. Conflicting views are fairly represented, with a sensible scientific defence of high technology hospital delivery. Detailed analysis of theoretical considerations and of specific practical problems make this a reference work for all 3 specialties which will greatly contribute to mutual understanding. There is a slight imbalance with excessive emphasis on metabolic and biochemical pathways and on pharmacology, but the management of clinical situations ranges fully from non-delivery surgery to post-natal intensive care and from coagulopathies to paraplegia. All medical libraries should have a copy which will be in constant use for the modern approach to anaesthesia in obstetrics.

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Body Weight Control: the Physiology, Clinical Treatment and Prevention of Obesity, A.E. Bender and L.J. Brookes. Pp. xiii + 294, illustrated. Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh, London, Melbourne, New York, 1987. £30.00.

The first International Meeting on Body Weight Control was intended to appeal to medical and paramedical bodies interested in obesity, including those engaged in the food industry and health management. This book derives from the papers given at the meeting by prominent international authorities which cover some of the complexities of obesity. Exceptionally for a book of this type, its 5 parts are in logical sequence, which makes for easy reading, and cover energy balance, the aetiology of obesity, obesity and health risks, treatment of obesity and its prevention. In addition, there is an appendix which includes the papers read at the satellite symposium entitled 'Dextrofenfluramine and body weight control.'

This book is certainly of interest but will probably appeal most to those with little current knowledge of the field. Others may find the chapters too brief in detail – an analogy to a book of biographical pen portraits which serves to

stimulate an interest rather than paint a comprehensive picture is not unfair. The first part of the book on energy balance exemplifies this but is counter-balanced by interesting information from the 2nd NHANE survey presented by Van Italie and Wotek. This survey confirms that it is the poor who become extremely obese in the USA, particularly if they are female and black. The succeeding chapter by Bray succinctly summarises the data available from metabolic and endocrine studies and concludes, justifiably, that our knowledge remains all too limited despite intensive research. This point is taken up time and time again throughout the book, indeed the chapters on the risks of obesity demonstrate the contention as to whether it is a major health risk when considered independently from smoking, hyperlipidaemia, diabetes and hypertension. Dr. Wooley, a clinical psychologist, suggests that clinicians 'overdo' the dangers of fatness and should be more realistic and sympathetic to their patients.

The chapters on treatment are realistic and practical. Garrow argues convincingly, if briefly, on the virtues of simple calorie restriction for long-term management rather than the short-term success of 'charlatan diets' popularised by the media, whilst Munro and colleagues suggest that a small subgroup of patients may, after all, benefit by long-term anorectic drug therapy. Ideally any treatment must be given in conjunction with behaviour therapy and Stunkard outlines how successful this may be although time consuming and labour intensive. Gries argues eloquently against more radical (surgical) methods when operative risks outweigh the risk of obesity. The final part of the book includes a review of anorexia and bulimia nervosa, and the impressive results from Scandinavian community based health projects which put the UK to shame.

Overall this is a useful and stimulating book which consolidates rather than extends knowledge of obesity but its major drawback is the limited depth of detail and references. Unfortunately its expense may deter those who will find it of most value.

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British Medical Bulletin. Vol. 42, No. 3, July 1986. **Endoscopic Surgery**, edited by R.A. Miller and J.E.A. Wickham. Pp. 221–339, illustrated. Published by Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh, London, Melbourne, New York, for the British Council, 1986. £16.00.

This book from the British Council Medical series, presumably aimed as an update to endoscopic procedures, attempts to embrace all specialties using diagnostic and therapeutic endoscopy. This major task is only partially achieved due to lack of uniformity in the content of each chapter, some giving excellent historical summaries and overviews of the present state of the art, but nothing on indications or technique and others concentrating on practical aspects. There are