

Acquired Neurological Speech/Language Disorders in Childhood, edited by Bruce E. Murdoch. Pp. 346. Taylor and Francis, London, New York, Philadelphia, 1990. Softback £19.00, cloth £40.00.

Consultants who have any contact with children or adolescents presenting with acquired neurological disorders, will find this book essential reading. The primary message of this timely book is that, contrary to received opinion, children with acquired neurological damage do not necessarily effect a full recovery of their communication skills. A thorough, ongoing evaluation of their cognitive abilities will usually reveal that they mostly have long lasting residual cognitive deficits, as well as subtle, yet disabling linguistic dysfunction, which most often comes to light during close scrutiny of their academic performance sometime after the neurological insult.

Apparent superficial competence in speech production and intellectual skills during a cursory examination in a clinician's office, will tell us little about the real ability of this group of clients. By means of a thorough exploration of the literature, case studies, and examination procedures, the authors of this book indicate to the reader how physicians or therapists who do not examine in depth for those multiple intellectual and linguistic competencies required for effective academic or peer group interfacing, might not have effectively served the complex long term needs of their patients.

The chapters deal effectively with communication disorders resulting from acquired aphasia, closed head injury, infectious diseases, brain tumours, dysarthria, dyspraxia, metabolic disease and neural tube disorders. It is thus an important reference book, if only to be used as a means of deciding on which are the appropriate referrals and treatment for one's patients. An important section on written language disorders, indicates how deficits in reading, spelling and mathematics, persist far longer than early clinical signs associated with neurological disease might lead the clinician to expect.

Although this book is about a small group of the childhood population, its strength is that it seeks to address the issue of damage resulting from acquired neurological disorder from a developmental point of view, rather than merely extrapolating tests and treatment from adult research. Its weakness is in the sections on treatment. A wider review of work being done America and England might have been useful in redressing this imbalance.

After reading Murdoch's book, we all should have a better idea of the wide variety of not only the obvious, but also the subtle communicative and intellectual disorders which seem to affect the majority of children and adolescents with acquired neurological symptoms.

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Management of Oesophageal Carcinoma, edited by Raymond L. Hurt. Pp. xvi + 290, illustrated. Springer-Verlag, London, Berlin, Heidelberg, N.Y. etc, 1989. Hardback DM 260.00.

Carcinoma of the oesophagus is a miserable disease. Not only are its symptoms distressing but so few patients are suitable for curative management at the time of presentation. This excellent book reviews the present day management of this condition; each contributor is an acknowledged expert in the field.

The book commences with a fascinating historical review reminding us of such giants in the field as Grey Turner and Ivor Lewis. There are interesting and concise chapters describing both surgical anatomy and epidemiology. It is intriguing that certain geographical areas, such as Northern Iran, have such a high incidence of the disease. The diagnosis is made both endoscopically and radiologically and each of the modern imaging techniques including MRI can be usefully employed. From the surgeons point of view the chapters related to the management of post-cricoid carcinoma, intrathoracic carcinoma and transhiatal oesophagectomy and staging are particularly important. Operative techniques and pre- and postoperative care are described clearly and coherently.

I think there is little doubt that this malignancy should be treated by individuals who specialize in this field in order to achieve the best possible results. Perhaps there is now little need for the occasional 'oesophagectomist'.

We are reminded that the majority of patients are suitable only for palliative treatment and endoscopic intubation, radiotherapy, lasers, chemotherapy and dilatation all have a part to play in relieving the patients of intolerable symptoms.

Overall the book is well written and pleasantly illustrated. It is extensively referenced and as such will be of value to all individuals involved in this field.

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Quick Reference to Ob-Gyn Procedures, Third edition, Hugh R.K. Barber, David H. Fields and Sherwin A. Kaufman. Pp. xvi + 495. J.B. Lippincott, Philadelphia, Grand Rapids, New York, St. Louis, San Francisco, London, Sydney, Tokyo, 1990. \$34.50.

For the British market the title of this book is confusing since even a cursory assessment reveals that 'procedures' is too narrow a description of its contents. It is best viewed as an American lecture notes or manual on all areas of obstetrics and gynaecology.

The book is well produced with the various sections clearly set out to allow it to be used as a quick reference to the whole range of the twin specialities. There is an excellent index, and although no source references are provided they are not essential to this kind of text. In style almost every sentence is set out as an item on a list or sub-list with, for example, a set of up to 25 orders which

may be relevant in the management of acute salpingitis, 8 means to allow the determination of ovulation, and 36 phrases under 7 main headings to outline 'The Rape Trauma Syndrome'.

The book is far too detailed for a medical student, but for those taking MCQ examination at a specialist level such lists may well be appreciated. In daily medical care it is essential that such lists are leavened by the balances of professional judgement and the techniques of clinical decision analysis. Such value judgements are almost completely absent from this book, and there is very little to indicate which items on each list may be relevant to which patients.

It is even more disappointing to find that all traces of the humanity of childbirth seem to have been so squeezed out by technology that no space has been found to highlight such areas as the importance of human support during labour, or how care should be provided for those who have suffered from a stillbirth. Although the treatment of mastitis is relevant to the American obstetrician there is apparently no need for him to have any awareness of the importance of bonding or the value of breast feeding. One should perhaps be grateful that the climate in this country has so changed as to make it difficult to find any equivalent British book with such a major deficiency.

Even more dangerous to the potential reader the book seems to have been written without taking any account at all of the work of the Oxford group in their massive study on what is, and what is not, effective care in pregnancy

and childbirth, based on a careful search of worldwide literature including all that is available from transatlantic sources. More than two years after the release of their database material such ignorance is unforgivable, and must by now be hazardous for any examination candidate.

The narrowly parochial origin is further reflected in a series of suggestions for routine management which would be regarded as excessive in a British context. Despite the encouragement of the authors there is no good evidence that it is advisable to examine every woman vaginally, both at booking, and at every subsequent antenatal visit, or that a mini GTT test should be done on every pregnant woman at least once, and possibly even twice. The ventouse extractor, despite the solid support for its use in a number of well controlled trials, for these writers does not even exist.

In summary, a well produced, easy to read, book providing good value per page but which should be used with great caution in a European context. A book not for the average student but useful for someone intending to join the American technological rat race, or for a jaded lecturer in this country who likes to use the orator's technique of setting up ideas purely to criticize their relevance.

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