Book review


The data for this book were collected over a 20-year period, during which time paediatric rheumatology has been developing in a quite remarkable way, with a number of centres providing clinical information, while there has been an increase in knowledge of fundamental biochemical and immunological mechanisms of inflammation.

The first two chapters present a brief discussion of the definition and types of rheumatic disease in children, including an approach to their incidence, prevalence, and classification, as well as the unique paediatric factors that modify rheumatic diseases and interpretation of clinical data. The next chapter is on basic concepts in the pathogenesis of autoimmune disease. As this sets out to be a textbook, it is essential that such a chapter be included, but in some aspects it is patchy and is not quite far-reaching enough for the specialist. The chapter on basic concepts of drug therapy may give rise to a little disquiet in British readers with the very marked emphasis on high dose aspirin. However, the subsequent chapters cover most problems met within paediatric rheumatology, including an excellent review of immunodeficiency and arthritis, one of the editor’s particular interests, as well as juvenile rheumatoid arthritis (personally I still quibble with the editor on the term rheumatoid in the child who does not carry rheumatoid factor), the spondyloarthopathies, rarer connective tissue disease, reactive arthritis, infection, as well as differential diagnosis.

The editor’s great knowledge and delight in words make the book easy to read. It is beautifully illustrated with clinical photographs, including immunofluorescent studies, and excellent reproduction of radiographs. The charts are clear and the tables easily understood. At times it does tend to be repetitive, and, as with all textbooks, despite the editor’s careful choice of both historical and reasonably up-to-date references many are somewhat out of date, while at times the indexing tends to be a little odd. Despite these minor criticisms, this book fills a great need in the field of paediatric rheumatology, supplying a good basic reference book for all the more common disorders encountered.

It has obviously been a labour of love, as well as hard work, in the meticulous way in which the tables and illustrations have been produced. Every hospital that indicates it has a department dealing with paediatric rheumatology should have easy access to this excellent book, while many paediatricians and rheumatologists called on to see an occasional case will find it a wise reference book.

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