of unexpected and prolonged scoliotic apnoea due to inherited deficiency of cholinesterase. There is also quite a long chapter which provides a comprehensive account of other causes of decreased and also increased plasma cholinesterase activity which may lead to confusion in the accurate diagnosis of the genetic defect.

D A HOPKINSON

Chorionic Villus Sampling. Fetal Diagnosis of Genetic Diseases in the First Trimester

By B Brambati, G Simoni, and S Fabro. (Pp 328; figures+tables. \$70.00.) New York: Marcell Dekker. 1986.

The editors of this volume have gathered a group of authors who are well known for their contribution to this field. They write on the development of the fetus and fetal membranes in the first trimester, on the ultrasonic assessment of the pregnancy during this time, and on the prevalence of chromosome abnormalities in chorionic villi. The development of chorionic villi sampling and the methods currently in use are described. The risks of the procedures are assessed and the problems encountered in trying to achieve this are discussed. Other chapters deal with chromosome analysis by the direct method and by culture of villi, with biochemical analysis and with DNA analysis for haemoglobinopathies and other gene defects. Social and ethical issues are also considered.

The individual contributions are authoritative, well referenced, and generally of a high standard. Some repetition and overlap is acceptable in a volume dealing with such up to date information. The last four years have seen a rapid growth in interest in chorionic villus sampling and this book provides a valuable interim, rather than definitive, statement.

I can recommend it to obstetricians and geneticists, both trainees and trained, who want to learn about this subject, as well as to those already acquainted with it.

CHARLES RODECK

In the Name of Eugenics

By Daniel J Kevles. (Pp 426.) London: Penguin Books. 1986.

This is an excellent book. I first encountered part of it serialised in the *New Yorker*, while on a transatlantic flight, and eventually obtained the remain-

ing issues from a friend. Now published by Penguin it will bring an important topic to a wide readership and may well influence the general image of the geneticist as perceived by the public. Since the picture that comes across is decidedly adverse, it would be sensible as well as salutary for medical geneticists to read it carefully.

The book is written by a science historian and its theme is the interrelationship of genetics and eugenics, from the 19th century to the present time. Most of the developments in genetics and their history will be familiar to geneticists, but what will be less familiar will be the repeated misapplications of these developments in eugenics and the far-reaching consequences over the years for society.

The early workers in genetics are vividly and fully depicted in a series of character vignettes that are delightful to read, and which show how important a scientist's temperament and political views can influence his approach to a topic like eugenics. The origins of eugenics are traced from Francis Galton and Karl Pearson, through Davenport and his American colleagues, to the remarkable flowering of human genetics in Britain in the form of Penrose, J B S Haldane, Hogben, and R A Fisher. In general the British (especially Penrose and Haldane) come over in a much more favourable light than do most of their American counterparts! Interwoven with these portraits is an account of the political and social consequences of the enthusiasm for eugenics and subsequently the reaction against it, which makes sobering reading; the issues involved and the class and racial prejudices of both politicians and scientists concerned are just as alive today as in the 1930s.

The relationship between Britain and America in the development of human genetics is an especially valuable contribution of this book, and the author's historical perspective serves him well in this. The attitudes of leading scientists 30 to 40 years ago still influence the subject as it exists today, notably the over-reliance on intellectual power alone and the undervaluing of technology and teamwork seen in Britain at that time and contrasting strikingly with the approach taken in America.

I think that everyone in human and medical genetics should read this book; much of it will and should be a sobering experience. My only criticism of it relates not to the author, but the publishers, who have used a tiringly small typeface. If you have poor eyesight you might be advised to read it in the back numbers of the *New Yorker*.

PETER S HARPER