acting genetic elements, which brings so many of the ideas of the book together.

In summary, the book suffers slightly from the fact that it is an edited volume with contributions from many authors. However, I think it is an excellent 'marriage' of interests and should provide both a good overview of multistage carcinogenesis and an insight into the problems of understanding that still afflict multistage carcinogenesis.

ANNE R KINSELLA

Catalog of Prenatally Diagnosed Conditions. David D Weaver. (Pp 251; £29.00.) Baltimore, London: Johns Hopkins University Press. 1989.

The author has set out to provide a McKusick-style catalogue of prenatally diagnosable conditions. There are 448 entries, including 34 chromosome abnormalities, 217 congenital malformations, and 84 inborn errors of metabolism. The 1221 references are listed at the end of the book and are identified in the text by first author and date. There is an exhaustive index that cross references all the conditions in which a given prenatal finding has been reported: for example, "hydramnios" refers to 106 different entries, "alpha-fetoprotein, elevated in maternal serum" to 48, and "fetal movements, decreased or absent" to 16. One condition that many people would think of in connection with reduced fetal movements, Werdnig-Hoffmann disease, is not listed, however, and this highlights one of the book's main drawbacks. It has its origin, as the author makes clear, in a systematic listing of all publications recording abnormal prenatal diagnostic findings. It is still too much an uncritical list of references, many of which are of purely historical interest. The reader is not told, for example, which of the 37 prenatal abnormalities listed under "spina bifida cystica" are likely to be the most helpful in an at risk pregnancy. Some of the entries include welcome comments by the author on the features or genetics of the condition, the diagnostic method of choice, or the limitations of particular methods, but not enough; too much of the book reads like the output of an abstracting service, and too much use is made, in

commenting on the applicability of different methods, of an irritating system of superscripts, which had me continually looking back to the key at the front of the book.

The book's second major drawback is its datedness. The references run up to 1987, and two years is a very long time in such a rapidly moving field. Word of mouth and duplicated newsletters are the ways most people keep up with prenatal diagnosis. The same publishers have shown, however, with the latest McKusick catalogue, that they can get a book out in six months, and the same approach applied to this book could greatly improve its usefulness.

I believe there is a gap in the market for the book into which this one could evolve in its next edition. The author will need to become far less self-effacing and be prepared to weed out much clinically irrelevant information, to write the entries instead of just listing abnormalities and references, to extend the introduction (brief reviews of such topics as the safety of chorion villus sampling, de novo structural chromosome abnormalities, and prenatal therapy would be welcome), and to tidy up many minor irritations in the organisation, terminology, abbreviations, and typography. He should aim to keep the text continuously updated and find a method of rapid publication. Then he will have a winner on his hands, but so far he is only half way there.

N R DENNIS

Human Achondroplasia—A Multidisciplinary Approach. Ed B Nicoletti, S E Kopits, E Ascani, V A McKusick. (Pp 491; \$95.00.) New York: Plenum Press. 1989.

This is the report of the Proceedings of the 1st International Symposium on Human Achondroplasia, held in Rome in November 1986, a well produced, hard backed volume of nearly 500 pages, comprising a number of short papers with discussions.

The first section deals with genetics, ultrastructure, and cartilage histochemistry; the second with clinical aspects and complications, together with anaesthesia and its problems; the third and fourth sections (approximately half the book) are devoted to the

surgery of spinal disorders and the techniques and results of leg lengthening. In the final short section (30 pages) social and psychological implications are discussed.

The book should be of interest to all those involved in the care of 'little people', and those engaged in basic science research relating to the skeletal dysplasias, although this latter field is changing so rapidly that some of a 1986 report must necessarily be 'time expired'. The long surgical section is of particular interest in presenting some widely differing views on leg lengthening, its techniques and timing, and indeed whether it should be advised at all.

The meeting was unusual for a scientific one in that several 'little people' were present as delegates, giving their own views. Although most of them would not have clearly understood much of the proceedings, they found it heartening that so many specialists are now engaged in both clinical and basic science research into the subject.

Although most of the separate reports can (or will be) found in specialist journals, this book is a valuable collection of papers dealing with all aspects of achondroplasia, and forms a ready reference for clinicians, geneticists, and laboratory workers involved in the subject.

One might question the value of a symposium dealing exclusively with one diagnosis (although one or two related disorders such as hypochondroplasia were briefly discussed), when many of the problems and the approach to them are clearly relevant to some of the rarer generalised skeletal dysplasias.

This is a neatly produced book, with many illustrations, some of them very good, mostly adequate rather than excellent.

RUTH WYNNE-DAVIES

Genetic Factors in Atherosclerosis: Approaches and Model Systems. Ed A J Lusis, R S Sparkes. (Pp 227; £82.50.) Basel: Karger. 1989.

Research into atherosclerosis has traditionally involved a multitude of disciplines. As a positive family history is one of the most important risk factors for the development of atherosclerosis, a strong genetic component