Hereditary Hearing Loss and its Syndromes. R J Gorlin, H V Toriello, M M Cohen Jr. Oxford Monographs on Medical Genetics No 28. (Pp 457; £150.00) Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1994.

On the premise that the worth of a book may be deduced from its condition, the 1976 text by Konigsmark and Gorlin, *Genetic and metabolic deafness*, shows all the signs of being one of the most valuable books in our departmental library. Another telltale sign which also applied is that it is hard to find, as one colleague or another is always consulting it. This is remarkable for a book almost 20 years old, in which the references have long been superseded and which, owing to the progress in syndrome delineation and identification, has become progressively more outdated. Nonetheless, despite these all too apparent problems, Konigsmark and Gorlin continued to fill a great void and to fill it with authority.

Happily Professor Gorlin has now decided to update the 1976 text in association with two new co-authors, Dr Konigsmark having died in 1973. The general format of the earlier text is retained, non-syndromic hearing loss being considered separately from syndromic forms. The total number of conditions covered had increased from 151 to 427. These conditions are considered in somewhat similar format to that used in *Syndromes of the head and neck* from Gorlin, Cohen, and Levin, with a general consideration of clinical features, specific reference to audiological and related findings, and discussion of the genetics and diagnostic criteria. Where avail-

able, some details of prognosis have been included.

This format works well, on the whole. The reviews of published reports for each condition are quite extensive, as we have come to expect, and the discussion is complemented by appropriate illustrations, clinical, audiographic, and, where appropriate, radiological. The book is particularly strong in reviewing the different syndromic forms of deafness, which are subdivided into discrete chapters on the basis of the associated system involved. More debatable, perhaps, is the wisdom of retaining the old format of classifying genetic hearing loss without associated abnormality which continues to be discussed in terms of pattern of inheritance as a function of audiogram pattern. Although this is clearly not satisfactory, it is hard to suggest an alternative which might have proved appropriate at this stage. Hopefully, by the time of the next edition, some more specific approach, based perhaps on family studies, may have emerged to guide the authors. These contributions are complemented by chapters on the history of genetic deafness, appropriate embryological overviews, and a brief contribution from Cohen on the basic principles of syndrome delineation and heterogeneity, mindful of a non-genetic audience.

I have kept this book on my desk for the past six or seven weeks and have referred to it liberally in the everyday course of a varied workload. It has been an invaluable asset in clinical work, as an aid to manuscript review, and as a source of key reference material. There have been a couple of occasions where

I have wondered at the somewhat eccentric choice of reference cited or the omission of a more valuable citation. Once or twice my interpretation of a particular reference did not absolutely accord with that given in this text. Overall, however, this is an outstanding book both for its breadth and detail. This work should be standard in every self-respecting Clinical Genetics Unit and every ENT and Audiological Medicine Unit and will prove invaluable to interested radiologists, neurologists, and metabolic physicians. It is a pleasure to be asked to review so complete and superior a work.

WILLIE REARDON

NOTICE

Genetics of Common Diseases

This one day conference, organised by The Royal College of Physicians, will be held in London on 20 October 1995. For further information contact the Conference Department, Royal College of Physicians. Tel: 0171 935 1174.