BOOK REVIEWS

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This latest edition of Syndromes of the head and neck differs in many respects from the two previous editions. The title now appears as number 19 of the Oxford Monographs on Medical Genetics series and with a new publisher comes a larger page size and a more condensed typeface. The author list has also changed with the addition of the late L Stephen Levin to Robert Gorlin and Michael Cohen from the last edition. As before, the principal authors are assisted by distinguished contributors, now numbering 18 compared to nine in the second edition.

The text covers syndromes with mendelian inheritance as well as those non-mendelian syndromes with otorhinolaryngological manifestations. As such, it overlaps with and complements other standard reference texts such as McKusick’s Mendelian inheritance in man.

The authors have continued in the tradition established in the first edition by carefully synthesising the contents of numerous key references relating to each syndrome. The same basic and reassuring structure detailing the manifestations in specific organs or systems has been maintained so that the relevant features of each condition are easily located.

The most significant change lies in the grouping of conditions rather than the alphabetical listing adopted previously. This move should help the clinician in his or her differential diagnosis. Sensibly, these groupings are often allocated separate chapters for common/well known and unusual categories.

The book is divided into 29 chapters. The first two cover deformations and disruptions and teratogenic agents and are followed by two chapters covering common and unusual chromosomal syndromes respectively. Metabolic disorders are included as a separate section and syndromes involving bone are dealt with under four separate headings, namely the osteogenesis imperfectas, chondrodysplasias and chondrodystrophies, craniofacial syndromes and miscellaneous bone lesions.

Syndromes featuring either short stature or overgrowth are considered in consecutive chapters. Hamartoneoplastic syndromes are covered in depth and this section includes several extensive bibliographies. A further chapter relates to the numerous syndromes affecting skin and mucosa. Syndromes with craniosynostosis occupy two chapters followed by a relatively short, but extremely thorough, review of disorders of craniofacial contour.

Separate sections relate to syndromes involving the central nervous system, contractures, and branchial arch and oro-acral disorders. Three chapters are devoted to oro-rhinological disorders. These are divided into common/well known clefing syndromes, other syndromes with clefing, and a separate chapter covering associations of clefts with other clinical features, although the rationale behind the distinction between these last two chapters is not clear. Syndromes with unusual facies are described in two chapters, again divided into well known syndromes and others. Patients with predominantly dental involvement constitute the majority of the abnormalities included in sections dealing with syndromes with gingival or periodontal manifestations and those with unusual dental findings. The two concluding chapters bring together a variety of miscellaneous syndromes involving the oro-facial region.

Finally, the appendices have been expanded and continue to provide reference data for craniofacial dimensions and landmarks of normal development. An extensive list of references is cited for most syndromes. These provide an interesting historical perspective as well as including more recent reviews and original articles. The references are, as always, selective and relevant.

This edition will maintain its place as an essential reference work in libraries and on the shelves of medical geneticists and all whose work involves abnormalities affecting the head and neck. The comprehensive index, excellent cross referencing, and suggestions for differential diagnosis will continue to prove invaluable to clinical practice in many disciplines. This book cannot be recommended too highly.

Michael J Aldred


This book aims to guide the student and non-specialist through the genetics publications by explaining terms commonly used by authors. Advances in molecular, clinical, and plant genetics are reflected in the increased size of this, the fourth edition. It represents a concise and useful explanation of over 7000 terms likely to be encountered in genetics. The diverse backgrounds of the many scientists who contribute to genetic research is reflected in the inclusion of terms from other disciplines, some of which may be unfamiliar to the clinical geneticist.

Inevitably, there are some omissions which this tojaudiced eye were most noticeable in clinical terminology. One might have expected common clinical terms, such as hyperelorism, to be included but this is not the case. Molecular terms appear to be more comprehensively treated and some of the explanations are strikingly concise and informative.

There are four appendices, of which the third is particularly fascinating, documenting chronologically the milestones in evolutionary biology and genetics from the development of the microscope in 1590 to the present day. The heavy emphasis on plant genetics will limit the value of this dictionary to those readers whose primary aim is to navigate the waters of purely clinical genetics. Nevertheless, it is to be strongly recommended to those whose ambition stretches to the laboratory and classical genetic arenas.

William Reardon