BOOK REVIEWS

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With the rapid increase in mapping and cloning of genes for many human diseases, more and more prenatal diagnosis becomes techni-

cally possible. Newer methods, such as in-
terphase FISH for prenatal diagnosis of chromosomal aneuploidies, are now be-
ginning to emerge on the clinical scene. Paced with the prospect of being superseded almost immediately, the production of a textbook covering such an expanding field is a daunting task.

Undaunted, Boué et al have written a comprehensive textbook which covers a wide range of topics. They include sections on basic cytogenetics and molecular genetics, as well as a world description of procedures and methods involved both in prenatal sampling and in sample analysis. The book does not set out to cover all the areas of fetal medicine, and issues such as ultrasound based diagnosis, immunohaematology, or exchange transfusion are not specifically excluded. However, the use of prenatal diagnosis in the management of mater-

nal viral infection is covered, with detailed discussion of the relative merits of specific indications, and genetic testing. A great asset is the text that can be used to produce another major catalog(ue), Mendelian Inheritance in Man. For each entry there is a presentation of the relevant data in se-

quences, starting with human epidemiological studies, thence to case reports of teratogenic effects in humans, and finally to animal ex-

periments, followed by a comprehensive ref-
eference list. The author wisely does not attempt to classify an agent into a specific grading of severity, but cites the data and allows the reader to make an appropriate interpretation. For some agents, he may pre-

face the entry with a clear, brief summary of the available evidence for a particular teratogen, or cite a major review of the issue.

The individual teratogenicity of illegal drugs is well covered. The practical issue of drug interaction of these agents is a problem to which most clinicians are exposed in their daily work. However, the text makes it clear that combinations of drugs are often difficult to address. The teratogenicity of new designer hallucinogens is as yet un-

known, especially with the variable purity of such agents. The same caveats must also apply for new medicines coming on the market, as their human teratogenic effects are as yet unknown, and cannot be covered in a catalogue such as this. The point about speci-

fies a subjectivity in thalidomide teratogenicity is well made.

Specific entries dealing with issues such as folic acid deficiency, anticonvulsants, and cyt-

toxic agents are clear and to the point. There are the odd transatlantic differences in no-
menculation which make tracking a particular agent difficult, but once found the data are well presented. There is a good and in-
teresting entry on the teratogenicity of video display terminals, and Shepard quotes that it is a “shame that we may be terrorizing a generation of women without a clear scientific imperative to do so”. This is the only in-

directly expressed opinion of the committee that I could find, which reflects the clear thinking and scientific approach of the author. I would recommend this book for its breadth of entries and clarity of presentation. It shows that there is still a place for a good book in a world of electronic information.

ANDREW GREEN

Principles and Practice of Sleep Medi-


There is much evidence that persistent sleep disturbance is very common and that it can have serious psychological or even physical effects, and yet this topic is often marginalized or ignored in professional teaching and train-

ing courses. Sleep disturbance specific to chil-

dren generally receives even less attention. However, this book would provide a clinician