

Book Reviews

Depression in Childhood: Diagnosis, Treatment and Conceptual Models. Edited by JOY G. SCHULTERBRANDT and ALLEN RASKIN. New York: Raven Press. 1977. Pp 192. \$15.00, \$10.20 (paperback).

This book is the result of a conference on 'Childhood Depression' convened by the National Institutes of Mental Health in Washington, U.S.A. during 1975. The edited proceedings are presented and form an important contribution to this complex and still controversial topic.

The contributors are all acknowledged experts in the field of depression, and they give a wide range of views, presented in a balanced way. Naturally the style tends to vary, which makes the book somewhat disjointed. As is often the case, conference reports tend to be repetitive, and this is made even more noticeable by the discussion papers which follow each chapter in the first half of the publication.

In some ways the book might be considered somewhat disappointing because more questions are asked than answered. However, it does give guidelines for the definition of childhood depression and offers suggestions for further research.

The conclusion of the conference was that childhood depressive disorders 'are real clinical phenomena' which require further study. No recommendations were given on treatment, except to say that it was thought premature to fund any large programme at this stage of limited knowledge.

For anyone actively working in the field of depression with children or adults, this collection of papers provides a wealth of information and some stimulating ideas. It is also useful in that it reviews past and present thinking for others generally interested in childhood depression and provides the best comprehensive overview available so far.

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Topics in Child Neurology. Edited by MICHAEL E. BLAW, ISABELLE RAPIN and MARCEL KINSBOURNE. London: SP Medical and Scientific Books. 1978. Pp 356. £17.50.

This book reprints some of the symposia and

workshops held at the Toronto International Congress of Child Neurology in 1975. There are major sections on neonatal neurology, temporal lobe seizures in childhood, behaviour disorders, and learning disabilities. Of particular interest are three careful reviews on minimal brain dysfunction and hyperactivity. Some reviews, however, such as that on anti-convulsant drug therapy in temporal lobe epilepsy in childhood are remarkably light-weight for a publication of this stature. All in all, a book to be selectively read, and not bought.

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Psychological Problems of the Child and his Family. Edited by PAUL D. STEINHAEUER and QUENTIN RAE-GRANT. Toronto: Macmillan. 1977. Pp 459. £10.00.

This textbook of child and adolescent psychiatry, reasonably priced by current standards, is written by twenty-three child psychiatrists, all but one at the University of Toronto. The editors present it as a basic text for 'students and practitioners' of medicine and the mental health professions' and aim to integrate 'biological, developmental, psychoanalytic, and systems perspectives' in such a way that it is comprehensive, authoritative, understandable and enjoyable. Their success has been patchy.

There are five sections: The child and his family; assessment of the child and his family; common syndromes in child psychiatry; psychological crises for child and family; and principles of intervention. The first contains all the book has to say about personality development in childhood and the last summarizes all treatment approaches. For the beginner both sections are too sketchy to be illuminating.

The highlights of the book occur when clinical good sense is applied in the description of common problems and their management. The broad distinction made by British child psychiatrists between conduct and emotional disorders, based as it is on the epidemiological differences between groups of disturbed children may mislead the clinician into false assumptions about the individual child. The