Two chapters discuss acquired childhood aphasia, first dealing with neuropathology and second with neurosurgical techniques. The Landau-Kleffner syndrome and its sub-types are properly discussed but some readers may be confused by the term "convulsive disorder" which is evidently used in parts of Australia where there is a lack of understanding for either epilepsy or for the situation in which the EEG contains discharges or spikes.

Therapeutic or educational management of this syndrome is well discussed, although the occasional points on the effects of corticosteroids are not emphasised. Other chapter titles are Speech and Language Disorders following Childhood Closed Head Injury, Communicative Disorders in Childhood Infectious Diseases, Linguistic status following Acute Cerebral Anoxia in Children, Linguistic Problems Associated with Childhood Metabolic Disorders, Communicative Impairments in Neural Tube Disorders, Speech and Language Disorders in Childhood Brain Tumours, Effect of CNS Prophylaxis on Speech and Language Function in Children, and Acquired Childhood Speech Disorders in Down's Syndrome. There is a tendency to begin the discussion of various disorders with a somewhat basic description which neurological readers might want to skip, but this approach makes the book more useful for those in earlier phases of education. Chapters discuss both the neuropathological substrate and the associated speech and language disorder, but the connection between the two, that is the mechanism by which the lesion alters the child's communicative abilities, is often unclear, pointing to the need for further research. The index is patchy and too short.

It is perhaps excusable to mention Reye's syndrome in two lines with the conclusion "the prognosis is poor", but that there is plenty of scope for speech and language evaluation of survivors of this and similar metabolic encephalopathies. There are two surprising apparent omissions. One is of Rasmussen's chronic encephalitis (recently linked to persistent cytomegalovirus infection) and the other is the oculoperaural syndrome. Although the oculoperaural syndrome as an acquired disorder (for example after meningitis or encephalitis) is rare in childhood, it is a situation where the speech disorder (anarthria) has a sound neurological basis. The authors touch on developmental aspects of humour and joke appreciation and the use of such knowledge in evaluating children of different ages with acquired disorders of language. Humour development in the assessment of acquired dysphasia is discussed both in the body of the text and in one of the rather few but detailed case histories, and is one of the worthwhile topics I have stimulated by this book. Do get it for one of your staff.

JBF STEPHENSON


Emphasises change in clinical psychiatry. Psychodynamic psychiatry held sway in the 1940s and 50s, social psychiatry was dominant in the 60s and 70s, and now in the 80s and 90s biological aspects attract most interest.