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Book Review

Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia, M. I. New and L. S. Levine, 1984 (Monographs in endocrinology 26), Springer-Verlag, Berlin, DM72, US$ 26.90.

Congenital adrenal hyperplasia is relatively common with an incidence in newborns of about 1 in 10000, but general awareness of this situation is recent. It is therefore timely that this monograph should appear. This book is about clinical endocrinology but necessarily involves steroid biochemistry as its basis. The different biological activities of many steroids determine that the chemistry and biology are inseparable. This close linkage has the advantage that clinical findings can direct one with great accuracy to a diagnosis and to its relevant investigation. The knowledge available in this monograph is therefore necessary to all concerned in the clinical investigation and treatment of these patients.

The contents of the monograph are: Chapter 1 Steroidogenesis and enzymatic conversions of adrenal steroid hormones, Chapter 2 Fetal sexual development, Chapter 3 Enzyme defects, Chapter 4 Recent advances: the fasiculata and glomerulosa as distinct glands, Chapter 5 Treatment, Chapter 6 Pubertal development, Chapter 7 Genetics, Chapter 8 Prenatal diagnosis. There is a short subject index and a 16-page list of selected references.

The contents therefore include a useful summary of recent findings on the genetic linkage with the HLA complex. The consideration of heterozygote detection is consistent with evidence in other areas like galactosaemia that individuals can carry two expressed mutant alleles to give a spectrum of changes ranging from gross disease to apparent normality. It should also be noted that isoenzymes under independent genetic control are well recognized. In other words some greater breadth of view might have strengthened some of the arguments developed in a detailed consideration of this group's work. There is justifiably only one page on prenatal diagnosis. Since it was mentioned that low maternal oestrogen levels in blood and urine could indicate cholesterol desmolase deficiency, it should also be pointed out to readers using this book for differential diagnosis that similar low levels might be expected in 17α-hydroxylase and 17–20 lyase deficiencies. Although Maria New must be given credit for her pioneering work on screening for this disease greater caution on the clinical benefits of screening might have been derived from experience in parallel areas. The accumulated experience of screening for this defect is due to be reviewed in 1985 at Liverpool in a Workshop attached to the SSIEM meeting and it may be inadvisable to anticipate the conclusions of such a review. Those with the 1983 edition of Stanbury and colleagues, *Metabolic Basis of Inherited Disease*, and with some other publications already have similar information from the same author(s).

In summary, this is a good monograph which achieves useful clarity on a common condition. It should be excellent for clinical endocrinologists in training or those requiring updating. Its appearance is timely since we are in the research and development phase of screening for this condition.

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