

## Book Reviews

HANDBOOK OF PERINATAL INFECTIONS, J. L. Sever, J.W. Larsen, Jr., and J.H. Grossman III, Little, Brown and Co., Boston, 1979, 199 pp.

This handy and authoritative book covers diagnostic and therapeutic aspects of most infections that occur in pregnant women and their offspring. The authors organize the chapters on individual infections under the following headings: frequency, diagnosis (mother and child, clinical and laboratory), prognosis (including teratologic considerations), management, and prevention. Isolation policies and procedures are covered where applicable. The important points of most chapters (which span an average of six pages) are summarized in tables. Illustrations are few. Oft-asked questions are presented and answered at the end of most chapters. The statements and recommendations of the authors are not referenced in this handbook, but each chapter ends with suggested readings that might lead one to relevant sources.

This book provides information essential to the care of perinatal patients in a well organized, easy to read, and concise form. It is not meant to be an exhaustive treatise on the state of the art (as is, for example, "Infectious Diseases of the Fetus and Newborn Infant," by J.S. Remington and J.O. Klein), but it answers many of our questions about perinatal infectious processes and offers practical suggestions for management. Any professional involved in the care of mothers and infants would find this book a convenient and useful addition to his/her office shelf. Students might do well to start with this book to gain an overview of a perinatal infectious disease problem.

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PRIMER OF EPIDEMIOLOGY (Second Edition)  
 G.D. Friedman, McGraw-Hill Book Co.,  
 New York, 1980, 288 pp., \$7.95.

Unfortunately, the epidemiology of birth defects is a rather specialized area and as such

is not touched on much in Dr. Friedman's book. For example, although we are reminded several times that the actual cause of death may not be the same as that listed on the death certificate, the problems (and potentials) of birth certificate studies are not mentioned. In his brief discussion of surveillance systems, he notes that "epidemics" are occasionally observed and that these might be exploitable to discover etiologies. In fact, the major utility of surveillance systems is to confirm or deny rapidly associations noted by alert practitioners, a purpose for which such systems have been very useful. The alert practitioner, of course, has been responsible for the discovery of most of the known human teratogens, including rubella, thalidomide, X irradiation, alcohol, and phenytoin. The epidemiologist enters afterward, to neaten up the details.

The jump from teratological laboratory to epidemiology is even a broader one. Unlike mutagenesis or even perhaps carcinogenesis, teratogenesis may proceed by a bewildering variety of mechanisms and display considerable species specificity. Although some human teratogens were relatively easily confirmed in laboratory animals (X irradiation), others were more difficult (thalidomide). The difficulties of species-to-species extrapolation and the role of epidemiology in it are (appropriately) not treated in the primer. Thus the laboratory scientist who hopes to pique the interest of his or her epidemiologist colleagues will have to go further than this book for ammunition.

I will continue to push this book as the shortest and most readable epidemiology text for the uninitiated. Dr. Friedman's considerable experience at Framingham and later at Kaiser show through in the realistic and informative examples, the newly added problems, and the general advice given to those planning a study with denominators. Those involved in teratology will have to take a few steps beyond this introduction to get to their field, but this book is an easy beginning.

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