

Book reviews

Feeding the Disabled Child

Edited by Peter B. Sullivan and Lewis Rosenbloom
Mac Keith Press, London, 1996

This is a book of 160 pages which includes, in 13 chapters of selected topics written by experts, all the aspects that can be presented by disabled children regarding feeding and their repercussion on nutritional status. The problems concerning feeding difficulties of the disabled child affect a multidisciplinary team and it is not surprising that paediatricians working in different rehabilitation centres, language and occupational therapists, paediatric neurologists, neonatologists, radiologists, paediatric surgeons and nutritionists from the UK and the USA all participate in the different chapters.

The development of eating skills in children is well described and the concepts of critical and sensitive periods have been studied with relation to some feeding problems of the disabled child. Amongst the causes of feeding difficulties, some have been studied in detail, such as oral-motor dysfunction, gastrointestinal dysfunction and bowel problems together with the associated neurological problems.

Respiratory problems during oral feeding and food aspiration are discussed in detail, both from the clinical and diagnostic imaging points of view. Special attention is given to the problem of drooling with a view of salivary physiology and the relations of oral-motor dysfunction, secretion of saliva and swallowing difficulties. All the aspects of treatment applied to drooling are reviewed, covering oral-motor therapy, behavioural programmes and surgical and pharmacological approaches.

The nutritional and neurodevelopmental consequences of feeding difficulties in these children are specially centred on the characteristics of secondary malnutrition that can occur, and the adverse effects on the development of the central nervous system. The role of possible iron deficiency and micronutrient deficiency is emphasized and the clinical signs of nutritional deficiency are detailed with the possible interactions between the drugs that the disabled child may be receiving and the different nutrients.

The therapeutic approach is also covered in one chapter related to the factors that contribute to abnormal feeding behaviour, such as behavioural responses to sensory aspects of feeding and abnormalities of oral-motor control function. Another chapter is dedicated to the management strategies for improving communication difficulties and oral and pharyngeal dysfunctions, stressing the importance of team work. At the same time, different aspects of enteral nutrition are described as well as problems related to the high incidence of gastroesophageal reflux in neurologically impaired children.

Finally, different ethical aspects that can be presented with relation to feeding problems and to difficulties for reaching a consensus with parents regarding treatment are very well described.

In my opinion this book is an excellent review of the problem as a whole, each chapter being accompanied by a very complete and up-to-date list of references. This is a book to be strongly recommended for paediatricians and all health workers who are in contact with disabled children.

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Paediatric Parenteral Nutrition

R. Barker, S. Barker and A. Davis
Chapman and Hall/ITP, New York 1996 pp 465

Over the past few years the improved techniques of artificial nutrition have contributed considerably to the decrease in the

morbidity-mortality of hospitalized patients. The development of parenteral nutrition and other technologies have, without doubt, facilitated the survival of premature and low birth-weight infants. As such, these techniques have been essential in the progress of the neonatal care and, to a large extent, that of paediatric specialities such as gastroenterology, surgery and intensive care.

To date, there are very few books dedicated to the techniques of artificial nutrition and with a focus on children in particular. As such, the gap-filling in the knowledge has been long awaited.

This book deals with the more basic aspects of paediatric nutrition and the result is an eminently practical compendium for use in daily clinical practice while, at the same time, one encounters centres interested in the investigation of the most recent aspects of artificial nutrition. Clearly, it is a book written by paediatricians for paediatricians although it should be of obligatory reading for all those involved in paediatric nutrition including the hospital pharmaceutical staff, dieticians and nurses.

The authors set out to convince the reader, using all the arguments possible of the necessity for assessment and, when necessary, for the correction of the nutritional status of the patient while, at the same time, being conscious of the importance of the cost-benefit value of parenteral nutrition in a society that constantly seeks to prioritize its available health care resources.

Certain themes dealt with are indispensable for the clinician commencing parenteral nutrition and include: assessment of nutritional status, parenteral nutrition requirements in paediatrics, monitoring total parenteral nutrition, pharmaceuticals in parenteral nutrition, venous parenteral nutrition and parenteral nutrition for neonates. Other chapters are dedicated to the advances in artificial nutrition in critical care patients, patients with gastrointestinal diseases and cancer.

Nutritional requirements change dramatically with age and the authors emphasize the nutritional requirements of the neonate and compare them to that of the premature infant, the breast fed, the school child and the adolescent.

The authors begin with the affirmation that the child is special. The child is in growth phase which implies increasing nutritional requirements. It is not an adult, either from the physical or psychological point of view, and is subject to a maturation process continually receiving signals from external as well as internal sources. The authors know the child and intend that the book will be special as well and not a book dealing with nutrition of the small adult. In this respect, the authors of the book stress specific themes of considerable importance, which are rarely addressed in paediatrics such as the psychological aspects of the child subjected to parenteral nutrition as well as ethical aspects of parenteral nutrition support.

On occasions, the same aspects have been addressed in more than one chapter which is understandable within the context of a compilation which includes more than 40 authors. In the majority of situations in which this occurs, no major contradictions are apparent and, moreover, even within the different approaches to the topics, the views are, essentially, concordant. Certain appendices of the book are certainly useful but, unfortunately for non-American readers, only the composition of preparations of parenteral nutrition commercially available in the USA are described. The authors are not wholly culpable.

As with the authors, we hope that those that benefit most from this book will be the children requiring nutritional support; they, more than the book itself and more than those dedicated to paediatric nutrition, deserve attention.

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