

## Book Reviews

---

*Am. J. Hum. Genet.* 77:896, 2005

*Genetics of Developmental Disabilities*. Edited by Merlin G. Butler and F. John Meaney. Boca Raton, FL: Taylor and Francis, 2005. Pp. 886. \$199.95 hardcover.

*Genetics of Developmental Disabilities* is a collection of reviews of common developmental disorders. It is written for all those interested in understanding the causes and pathogenesis of these disorders as well as those involved in the care of affected patients. Written as a textbook, it contains three main sections. The first section covers the basic principles of medical genetics. Three chapters are particularly instructive—namely, the chapters on the history of mental retardation, the impact of the Human Genome Project on our understanding of developmental disorders, and the value of animal models for understanding these disorders.

The second part of the book describes classic examples of conditions involving developmental disability. It forms the core of this well-designed book. The chapters on fragile X syndrome, sex-chromosome anomalies, Angelman syndrome, velocardiofacial syndrome, Smith-Magenis syndrome, Rett syndrome, and phenylketonuria are outstanding.

The last section of the book covers other related topics, such as neuropsychiatric and behavioral aspects of developmental disabilities and cerebral palsy. Of particular interest is the chapter on genetic epidemiology of developmental disabilities. It contains an excellent review of the genetic aspects of autism. A useful glossary ends this well-written book.

Overall, in editing this multiauthored book, Merlin G. Butler and F. John Meaney have succeeded in providing an updated source of knowledge for those involved in teaching the practice of medical genetics to medical and graduate students. As such, it is also an important resource for all health care professionals involved in the testing, care, and treatment of patients with developmental disabilities. It is a natural complement to available textbooks that are more directed toward describing the basic principles of medical genetics.

MICHEL VEKEMANS

Département de Génétique  
Hopital Necker Enfants Malades  
Paris

© 2005 by The American Society of Human Genetics. All rights reserved.  
0002-9297/2005/7705-0019\$15.00

*Am. J. Hum. Genet.* 77:896–897, 2005

*Genetic Disorders and the Fetus: Diagnosis, Prevention and Treatment*. 5th ed. Edited by Aubrey Milunsky. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004. Pp. 1,224. \$225 hardcover.

Reinforce your bookshelf and make room in your library for the fifth edition of Milunsky's classic tome *Genetic Disorders and the Fetus*. You will need a weight-lifting regimen to haul this 1,224-page book to your clinic, but it will be worth the effort. Milunsky draws on his own years of experience, along with those of his 56 coauthors, to provide the reader with a comprehensive review—from prenatal population screening through third trimester screening and management—supported by extensive references. Topics run the gamut from the “how-tos” of amniocentesis, chorionic villus sampling (CVS), and selective abortion to prenatal diagnosis for specific genetic disorders and issues of population screening (i.e., maternal serum screening), ending with an appropriate discussion of ethical issues and medicolegal aspects of prenatal diagnosis.

Although the average clinician may not read this book cover to cover, I would like to see some of the introductory chapters placed earlier in the book. For example, the chapter by Prior et al., “Molecular Genetics and Prenatal Diagnosis,” should be one of the first chapters because many of the prior chapters on prenatal genetic diagnosis made through CVS and amniocentesis refer to many of the molecular techniques covered in this chapter, some of which may be foreign to the nongenetics reader. I would like to see the chapters on common syndromes, like cystic fibrosis, and on prenatal diagnosis of hemoglobinopathies precede the chapters on rarer conditions, such as disorders of amino acid or lipid metabolism.

I applaud Milunsky for making the first chapter be about genetic counseling, whereas many other books seem to relegate this important topic to the back of the book, as almost an afterthought. I would like this chapter to remain more general on the topic of genetic counseling, instead of going into detailed recommendations for certain disorders (e.g., there is an extensive section on pregnancy care for women with Marfan syndrome). This chapter should rely more heavily on references to other chapters. Although Milunsky acknowledges that there is a lack of referrals to medical geneticists and genetic counselors, there is no citation of resources for finding such professionals, such as the ResourceLink of the National Society