

Book reviews

Nutrition in Early Life. J. B. Morgan and J. W. T. Dickerson (editors) Chichester: Wiley. 2003. Pp. 374. £34.95 paperback. ISBN 0471 496243

This textbook, dedicated to Professors McCance and Widdowson, comprehensively covers the interdependent effects of maternal and fetal physiology, nutrition and metabolism. The editors have drawn ‘considerable inspiration’ from the book *Developmental Nutrition* by Lucille Hurley, which was published in 1980 and is now out of print. Although an excellent and useful text at the time of publishing, it is now out of date. As the editors state in the preface to this book: ‘... the increase in knowledge and the recognition of the importance of developmental aspects of nutrition in the training of health professionals pointed to the need for an up-to-date and extended text incorporating the scientific aspects of the subject and their practical application’.

This readable and enjoyable book is intended to be a student textbook and would be useful for any undergraduate student, researcher or healthcare professional with an interest in maternal and fetal nutrition and health. It is primarily aimed at the UK market and contains twelve chapters covering the following topics: ‘Growth, development and the chemical composition of the body’, ‘Pre- and periconceptual nutrition’, ‘Maternal physiology and nutrition during reproduction’, ‘Physiological and nutritional aspects of the placenta’, ‘Lifestyle and maternal health interactions between mother and fetus’, ‘The fetus at birth: maternal and fetal preparations for postnatal development’, ‘Fetal, infant and childhood growth and adult health’, ‘Nutrition in infancy’, ‘Complementary feeding for the full-term infant’, ‘Nutrition of the low-birth-weight and very-low-birth-weight infant’, ‘Nutrition in childhood’ and finally ‘Practical advice on food and nutrition for the mother, infant and child’.

Each chapter begins with a useful list of ‘learning outcomes’ describing the information the author aims to convey to the reader and thus facilitating instruction or self-teaching. Although this is a difficult subject area to divide into discrete consecutive chapters, the editors and authors have evidently carefully considered the content of each of the sections, which are clear, concise and distinct from each other. The book contains no appendices and the useful reference charts and tables are contained within each chapter; however, the sections are clear and well labelled, making it easy to refer to the appropriate information. The chapters each contain an introduction and conclusion section and a selection of key references.

The editors and contributors, all of whom are distinguished scientists who are well published and respected in their fields, set themselves a difficult task in developing this text, which covers a vast, complicated and sometimes controversial subject area. Although many of the chapters

cover similar subject areas to other texts, this book has collated all of the various aspects of nutrition from a developmental point of view. The text includes the genetic, metabolic and environmental interactions that effect the development of the fetus through to maturity, and emphasises the importance of early nutrition on growth and development throughout life. As well as providing the scientific basis for nutrition in development, the book also addresses nutrition-related public health issues and provides practical guidelines for good nutritional practice.

As the primary aim was to provide a student textbook it would have been impossible to fully review the literature and include all of the important references in each chapter. However, the book provides a generally well-balanced overview of each subject area and a sound base from which the reader may explore the literature further if they wish.

In conclusion, the editors and authors should be commended for producing the comprehensive, yet appropriately pitched, textbook that they had set out to provide, and which will prove to be useful to many.

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Animal Biotechnology: Science-Based Concerns. Committee on Defining Science-based Concerns Associated with Products of Animal Biotechnology. 1st ed. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. 2002. Pp. 181. £24.95 paperback. ISBN 0 309 08439 3

I am not generally well disposed towards books written by committee. There is a tendency to level down rather than up, and to use complex language where simple statements would be more effective. Reading the Executive Summary of this book did little to dispel my concerns, which were further amplified by the printer’s choice of a serif font in a point size that challenged my vision, glasses notwithstanding. However, to my considerable pleasure and relief, the main body of the book provided a concise, well ordered and, insofar as a plant scientist can judge, comprehensive introduction to the scientific concerns associated with likely developments in animal biotechnology. The authors are a group of twelve experienced scientists and policy-makers who were also able to draw on the views of a wide range of national and international