

## Book Reviews

### World Medical Journal - Issue devoted to twin studies

Official Journal of the World Medical Association (New York). Edited by Stanley S. B. Gilder (London). Published by *Domus Medica* (Copenhagen). Vol. 14, N. 6, November-December 1967.

Since their first being the object of scientific interest in Francis Galton's work on "The history of twins as a criterion of the relative powers of nature and nurture" in 1875, twins have been arousing growing interest in ever larger areas of Medicine and Biology.

This has culminated in more recent years in the establishment of a number of specialized Centers for Twin Studies (generally as a means to human and medical genetic research) such as the Rome "Gregor Mendel Institute for Medical Genetics and Twin Research"; in the establishment and running up of "Twin Registers", such as the Scandinavian ones; in a number of specialized publications and Journals, such as the "Acta Geneticae Medicae et Gemellologiae"; in the publication of authoritative reports, such as the 1965 Report of the WHO Meeting of Investigators on Methodology of Twin Studies ("The Use of Twins in Epidemiological Studies"); and, last but not least, in an International Symposium on Twin Studies, recently called by the Mendel Institute, and to be held in Rome in 1969.

The importance of twins in Medicine has been recently stressed by the authoritative World Medical Journal, the Official Journal of the World Medical Association, by devoting a recent issue (Nov.-Dec. 1967) to Twin Studies. This includes the following articles, by leading scientists:

*The Value of Twin Studies in Epidemiology* (R. Cederlöf), stressing the difficulties in obtaining strictly comparable controls in epidemiological studies and the importance of the unique opportunity provided by the existence and

possibility of comparison of identical and non-identical twins.

*Twin Research and Psychiatry: past findings and present trends* (J. Shields), indicating the importance for psychology and psychiatry of discriminating between hereditary and environmental factors in human behaviour, especially as far as delinquency is concerned, and the prominent role which may be played by twins in such studies.

*Twin Studies in Orthopaedics* (K. H. Berquet), concerning the possible extension of twin research to the study of postural defects, scoliosis and other anomalies of the vertebral column, which may all show a strong genetic component.

*Twinning in West Africa* (P. P. S. Nylander), reviewing the incidence of twinning in some West African countries (Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Gambia), as well as examining the causal factors of the phenomenon and its relationships to fetal mortality.

*Twin Studies in Rheumatoid Arthritis* (J. A. Boyle, W. R. Greig, W. W. Buchanan), criticising past studies because of their failure to exactly discriminate between MZ and DZ twins, and describing the results of more precise, recent studies, suggesting that the existence of a relatively weak genetic predisposition (40%) to rheumatoid arthritis.

### Twins and supertwins

By Amram Scheinfeld, J. B. Lippincott Company - Philadelphia and New York, 1967. Bound volume with jacket. 292 pages. 21 illustrations. 9 tables or charts. 15×23 cm. \$ 6.95.

Twins are not only the object of wider and wider scientific interest, but of general curiosity as well, because of the uniqueness of their condition, and/or of direct concern to a fairly large fraction of the general population, because of their relatively high fre-

quency. As a matter of fact, the frequency of a twin birth being by and large of 1/80, there will be one twin every forty individuals, one twin or parent of twin every twenty, and so on, with the practical result that almost everyone has a twin, or twins in his family.

Practically everyone is therefore interested in twins, either for scientific reasons or simple curiosity and/or direct concern. And, strange as it may appear, when dealing with twins scientific data may be of interest to the layman, and curiosities and anecdotes to the scientist.

These are but some of the reason's why this new book by Amram Scheinfeld, the author of many publications on human heredity for the general reader, may be welcomed.

In «Twins and Supertwins» the subject of multiple-born is dealt with on the basis of original data and detailed accounts on their origin and birth, different types, frequency, and special problems related to education, individual and pair-psychology, family and social environment, physical and mental traits, health and sickness, etc.

Nicely illustrated with numerous charts and drawings by the Author himself, completed by analytical lists of references and well presented by the Publisher, although especially written for the layman, the book is recommended to all who are interested in twins.

### The placenta in twin pregnancy

By S. J. Strong and G. Corney Pergamon Press - Oxford, 1967. Bound volume with jacket. XVI-134 pages. 34 coloured and 52 black-and-white illustrations. 16 tables. 18×24 cm. £ 5 5s. (\$ 14.00 approx.).

As Dr. J. Chassar Moir puts it, in his foreword to this book, "It is a curious fact that a happening so remarkable as the occurrence of a twin pregnancy should, hitherto, have attracted but little serious attention from obstetricians. Every student knows ... that there are uniovular and multiovular twins; but here the interest usually wanes, and questions

that could delve deep into the secrets of genetics are left unasked or are heedlessly brushed aside".

This recent book by Drs. Strong and Corney now provides an account of the problems related to twin placentation and pregnancy, which is of particular interest for physiologists and geneticists, and of direct concern to obstetricians.

The place of twins and twin placenta in myth, history and science is first examined as an introduction. Once modern conceptions stressed, and old beliefs swept away, developmental aspects, i.e. the main ontogenic stages, and the frequency of the different types of twinning are reviewed. The central part of the work is then concerned with the examination of twin placentae and of the vascular communications in both types, mono-chorial or dichorial.

The mass of information provided and the beautiful colored plates, make this book highly recommended to everyone interested in twin research, and especially to obstetricians.

### Abnormal hemoglobins in human populations - A summary and interpretations

By Frank B. Livingstone. Aldine Publishing Company - Chicago, 1967. Bound volume with jacket of XII-476 pages including 24 figures and 4 tables. 15×24 cm. \$ 12.50.

The last few years have witnessed a tremendous trend in researches concerned with the inheritance, biochemistry and distribution of human abnormal hemoglobins. Furthermore, the possibility of applying to these, as well as to many other such traits ever more refined computer models of population genetics, while granting new possibilities of analysis, may also give us new insights into human population and evolution studies.

This is well demonstrated by Dr. Livingstone's book, which is a compilation of the frequencies of the abnormal hemoglobins, thalassemia and the glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase deficiency in the world's population.

The data published by some 800 works up