reduced, thus increasing the economic burden on hospitals and creating uncertainty about their financial stability. Whereas physicians and administrators in the United States have a mandate to secure the availability of perinatal services no such mandate exists in the United Kingdom. Faced with having to pay for referrals to a regional centre one wonders whether district maternity hospitals will simply not refer their babies and do the best they can using their own limited facilities.

This book is by far the most absorbing account of the organization of perinatal services that I have had the pleasure to read. There is the inevitable overlap of information between chapters but this is no problem because its nice to have a different slant on some of the aspects covered. The standard of writing is impressive.

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The Hand Examination and Diagnosis

3rd edition

American Society for Surgery of the Hand

Churchill Livingstone 1990, London, 144 pp. £9.50

I liked this little book. I recently listened to a colleague at the annual meeting of the British Association for Accident and Emergency Medicine (formerly the Casualty Surgeons Association) describing the rather poor general standard of knowledge of hand anatomy and, therefore, hand assessment in our departments and, presumably, those other services who deal with hand problems. I couldn't agree with her more, and I feel that this book goes a long way toward dispelling such ignorance.

It's a small book; I read it all in under 2 hours, which is a rarity in medical texts. It is divided into two sections, the first entitled 'Examination', the second 'Common Clinical Problems'. In the first section, the anatomy of the hand is described in some depth and with the emphasis on practicality. This is accompanied by relevant illustration and a description of the appropriate method of clinical assessment of the part described. This portion of the book alone would be worth its weight in gold to the average A&E Senior House officer. The second part of the book is broad-based, including short chapters on congenital anomalies, lacerations, acquired deformities, infection, tumours etc. In this section there is a short description of the appearance of many conditions, from torn ulnar collateral ligaments of the MCPJ of the thumb and Boutonniere deformity to Madelung's deformity. The emphasis is on appearance and assessment with little pathological and no

therapeutic detail. Much of this section is of interest, rather than essential, to the A&E person but it does quickly mention many conditions which would otherwise have been completely forgotten by most of us who examine hands every day of our working lives.

I think that any doctor from any specialty where a hand might be encountered should read this book. Certainly it would do no harm to make the 'Examination' section required reading for all A&E personnel before commencing work, a true manual, so to speak.

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