Book reviews

Progress in Stroke Research 1 edited by R M Greenhalgh and F Clifford Rose (pp 412; £22.50) Bath: Pitman Medical Press, 1979.

Stroke is common, disabling and depressing. Greenhalgh and Clifford Rose have gathered nearly 80 authors who, between them, contribute 45 chapters on all aspects of this illness. Although not stated explicitly, the volume reads like a "Symproc", exhibiting all the unevenness of such a publication. Many chapters consist of no more than two or three pages summarising data presented in full elsewhere. There are some original contributions, and one or two outstanding essays. The introductory chapters on epidemiology give a lucid account of stroke mortality based on published statistics for England and Wales for the years 1958-1975. Gautier contributes two excellent chapters summarising his influential views on the importance of extra-cerebral vascular causes of stroke. The importance of blood viscosity is presented well by Thomas, although no clear indications are given as to "when to apply the leech" to those with marginally raised haematocrits; nor would all agree with Thompson's aggressive surgical attitude to the asymptomatic carotid bruit. The sections on medical assessment and management consist, in the main, of brief reviews appropriate to a text book, but the chapter on anticoagulants (Perkins) is excellent and should be compulsory reading along with Brust's review in *Neurology* (1977; 27; 701) for all neurologists in training. The contributions on non-invasive assessment of carotid artery disease are full of promise, but the techniques described have not replaced angiography yet, and the regional cerebral blood flow studies have not entered routine clinical use, despite the considerable amount of information they have provided. Much space is devoted to the surgery of stroke, both of carotid bifurcation and of the newer fashionable extracranial to intracranial by-pass, to which a whole chapter on technique is devoted. The real problem, however, is whom to select for surgery and this difficult topic is tackled by Fields; his 16 aphorisms

are gems, but it is a pity that the data on which they are based is not given. The real purpose of this book is not clear, for it is not an adequate multi-author textbook on stroke, nor is it a representative view of stroke research today. The title suggests that there is more to come.

CD MARSDEN

The Human Brain by N Ghuhbegovic and TH Williams (pp 176; £17.95) London: Harper & Row Ltd, 1980.

The authors aim at students entering the field of human neuroanatomy for the first time to find out a great deal about the appearance and organisation of the brain. They also mention in the preface the exceptional beauty of the human brain. To enhance the "make-up" they fix the brain in formalin, place it at -25 to -30°C for 8 days and thaw it under running cold water for 24 hours. The freezing and thawing procedure is repeated two or three times. Blunt teasing reveals rather well the white depths of the brain. All the photographs are good. Some are more beautiful than useful. My favourite is the optic radiation from the basal aspect. It seems unnecessary to reduplicate pictures in colour and in black and white. There are some (black and white) rather macabre views of the brain within the dura with the eyes attached, and there is too much of the cerebellum. It would appear that the superior cerebellar peduncles connect the dentate nuclei, nothing goes further up! The brainstem is also a little confusing: the hypoglossal nucleus is surely not where it is shown in Figure 4-2 and in the accompanying drawing; it is all right in Figure 4-9, a Weigert preparation. The complexity of the white matter of the cerebral hemispheres receives much prominence in the teased specimens, without, however, making new sense. It is good to see the white anterior limb of the internal capsule merge into the thalamus in a conventional horizontal slice instead of the diagrammatic bend at the genu. The book is

not a sine qua non for the beginner; but it is nice to have, if one can afford it and if one has no access to the real thing.

IVAN JANOTA

Clinical Electroneurography Second edition, by MP Smorto and JV Basmajian (pp 298; \$28.50) Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins, 1979.

It would be very useful for teacher and pupil alike were the substance of many scattered papers on nerve conduction to be gathered within a single cover. In exuberant prefaces the authors express confidence that they have supplied this want and may have to produce a further edition. An unpleasing air of self-satisfaction, indeed, hangs over the whole enterprise, finding early expression in a list of historical milestones which begins with Galen and ends "1961 Basmajian introduced fine wire bipolar electrodes." Many important papers are quoted, it is true, and many useful illustrations reproduced, but there is a great deal of unnecessary padding, many of the authors' own illustrations are unhelpful and some figures bear the wrong legends or the wrong labelling. The choice of words is sometimes weird (p27 "they . . . were able to record sensory waves on the same nerve"), and often careless (p57 "by means of nerve conduction studies of the nerve fibres"), but to this reviewer the most eccentric aspect of the whole book is the "series of unique photographs . . . illustrating useful techniques for muscle testing of specific nerves." These depict a well-formed young female model whose muscles are, happily, invisible.

The most serious criticism is the absence of just that kind of help and advice an inexperienced worker is entitled to expect in a work of this kind, namely the little practical tips, the warnings and the lessons learned from everyday grappling in the clinic. The authors seem to lack intimate experience with the manoeuvres they describe. Despite these defects the book has some value as a source of reference.

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