The tremendous advances over the past few years in our knowledge of the neurochemistry and pharmacology of synaptic transmission has tended to overshadow research into brain energy metabolism in relation to cerebral function. Yet significant and fascinating progress has been made in the study of these aspects over the last decade, as this excellent volume amply testifies. Born out of a recent symposium it contains 44 first class papers divided into seven sections. There is much of interest to the clinician in this book especially in the sections on cerebral blood flow, utilisation of substrates and cerebral metabolic rate. New developments in non-invasive methods for studying cerebral metabolism in man, in particular positron emission tomography, are described. On a more basic level several papers concern recent applications of the powerful 2-deoxyglucose method for studying regional brain metabolism. The book is exceptionally well produced and illustrated and possesses an adequate index. Although expensive it is nevertheless good value.

R RODNIGHT

Spina Bifida Occulta. Orthopaedic, Radiological and Neurosurgical Aspects. By CC Michael James and LP Lassman. (Pp 230; £20.00, \$48.00.) London: Academic Press, 1981.

This monograph is by two of the principal pioneers of the study of so-called "occult" spinal dysraphism. An orthopaedic surgeon and a paediatric neurosurgeon in close partnership were able to explore the means of recognising, diagnosing, and treating these malformations at a time when little attention was paid to them elsewhere. The first 200 cases are here described in detail and provide a very helpful basis for the neurosurgeon with limited experience of the conditions that may be encountered. The excellent black and white photographs assist considerably.

As the authors mention, much has changed since the earlier experience was gained. The value of this book is therefore diminished for present-day neurosurgeons. Myodil for myelography was soon replaced by air in most clinics which in turn has been superseded by the more informative metrizamide. A short section on more up-to-date myelography is however provided. The development of bi-polar coagulation and the operating

microscope are other improvements together with the use of sensory evoked responses, while the important observation of changes in circulation, using cytochrome oxidase studies of the malformed neural structures during operation has helped us to understand better why these children may deteriorate if untreated. These advances can find no place in a book devoted to early experiences. Above all the passage of time has given us a measure of the importance of early diagnosis and treatment. The long-term outcome of these 200 early cases described in the book is very valuable and it is to be hoped will attract the attention of those who so far have not attached to "occult" spinal dysraphism the importance which it deserves.

This monograph, probably the only one on the subject, is highly recommended for neurosurgeons and orthopaedists but especially for paediatricians to whom may occur the first opportunity for recognising that which is not really "occult" but apparent to the alert eye.

KENNETH TILL