Book reviews

Biomedical Aspects of Depression and Its Treatment. By Ross J Baldessarini. (Pp 180; \$19.50.) Washington: American Psychiatric Press Inc, 1983.

Depression is a common condition with a life time risk of clinically significant depression of greater than one in ten. It is apparent from clinical experience that the term depression covers a wide range from excessive sadness to severe medical conditions which bear all the hallmarks of a definite biologically-based disease. Interest in the latter group of depressive illnesses increased markedly in the last decade or so with the advent of the antidepressants, both tricyclic and MAOIs. Dr Baldessarini, Professor of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, has written an excellent and succinct account of these aspects of depression. He covers the genetics, biochemistry and physiology of depression in the first part of his book and then in the second outlines recent advances in the pharmacology of antidepressants.

Two features stand out in this book. Firstly, it represents a sober and balanced account of recent scientific findings and its conclusions are cautious and unexceptionable. The second feature is a series of useful summary tables which deal with the research topics and various other aspects of the biology and pharmacology of depression.

The book is an excellent distillate of modern research findings in depression and can be thoroughly recommended to all those carrying out research in the field and also to those clinicians who have an interest in keeping up with current consensus opinion on recent research findings.

MALCOLM H LADER

Fundamentals of EEG Technology. Vol. 1 Basic Concepts and Methods. By Fay S Tyner, John R Knott and W Brem Mayer Jr. (Pp 330; \$61.00.) New York: Raven Press, 1983.

Here, at last, is a really clear basic book for the absolute beginner in EEG. It is as useful for the aspiring clinical neurophysiologist as for the trainee technologist. The authors assume nothing and start with a resumé of first principles of electricity and electronics, numeracy and measurement. On this foundation is built up the technological basis of EEG machines, elec-

trodes, polarity conventions and localisation, activation procedures and artefacts. Diagrams are used profusely and are all labelled so that every detail of their meaning is unambiguous. There is an exceptionally broad range of well chosen and well annotated illustrations for the classification of EEG activities. The promised second volume will deal with clinical correlations.

The authors are particularly explicit on measurements, on the important topic of electrical (and other) safety, on eye movement artefacts, on polygraphic recording of the neonate and on which EEG features are normal and which abnormal.

This book has a floppy cover with sturdy ring binding. The whole impression is of a comfortable, friendly and not too intellectual attitude that makes you want to take it home, read it through and get started in EEG. It should do wonders for recruitment!

PAMELA F PRIOR

Electroclinical Features of the Psychomotor Seizure. By Heinz Gregor Wieser. (Pp 242; £40.00.) London: Butterworths, New York: Gustav Fischer, 1983.

There are two methods of approaching clinical description. The first is to study large populations and to draw statistical conclusions, and the second is to study intensively small numbers of individuals and to extrapolate the findings to the generality of patients. This monograph is an extreme example of the latter approach. The book is divided into three sections. The first is an enormously detailed clinical and stereo-EEG study of spontaneous psychomotor seizures in 29 patients and of intracerebral stimulation in a further 23. The second section consists of 11 illustrative case histories chosen from section 1, and the third a discussion and extrapolation of these data. In section 1 is the meat, and astoundingly indigestible it is. Clinical and stereo-EEG findings are analysed by computer-based correlation, carried to bewildering lengths, and supported by perplexing diagrams. Clarity is sacrificed to all-inclusiveness in a way only possible with computed analyses, and the overall effect baffling. Nevertheless, good points are made, and for instance, the importance of temporal as well as topographical analyses of the EEG findings are rightly stressed. The second section is refreshingly clear, and the case histories are discussed in depth with great precision. I most enjoyed the third section, as here is a masterly summary of

previous clinical and EEG studies of the psychomotor seizure, the role of intracerebral recording and the implications of the present data. This section is comprehensive and well balanced. The debt to the work of Penfield and his Montreal colleagues is obvious, but their findings are critically extended. There is an interesting and stimulating discussion of both the anatomical and pathophysiological mechanisms of psychomotor seizures, although it is doubtful whether the data entirely support the proposed reclassification of psychomotor seizures or the notion of limbic epilepsy (a most overstated concept). The British reader especially has a lot to learn, as little intra-cerebral EEG recording is carried out in this country, and the author's experience in these techniques is authoritative. The importance of this work for epilepsy surgery is concisely discussed, and again in this area the fundamental value of intracerebral EEG recording is clearly demonstrated. I found the work often tantalising, never prosaic and always fascinating. It is essential reading for all those with a serious interest in the subject.

SIMON SHORVOY

Experimental Therapeutics of Movement Disorders. Advances in Neurology Vol. 37 Edited by Stanley Fahn, Donald B Caine and Ira Shoulson. (Pp 339; \$52.08.) New York: Raven Press, 1983.

This is the 37th volume in this series to appear in 10 years. It is also the 10th volume in the series concerned with Parkinsonism, movement or extrapyramidal disorders. Many other publishing houses are presently following a similar policy of mass publication so that the reader is veritably flooded by several monographs each year on the same topics.

How should one choose? Or, since personal taste and individual interest are the main determinants of choice, is it more pertinent to ask how do the publishers justify yet another book on this subject?

Half of this book is devoted to Parkinsonism and half to the various dyskinesias. Contributors discuss the results of low dose levodopa, long term bromocriptine therapy, serotonergic agents for levodopa induced hallucinosis and drug holidays. The efficacy of dopamine agonists bromocriptine, pergolide (not available in the UK) and lisuride in patients with dose related fluctuations is confirmed, though random "swinging" and "resistant fluctuators" remain intractable. New ergoline derivatives

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are shown to be effective, but no more so than bromocriptine; psychosis and ergot-like toxicity are unsolved hazards.

Of the dyskinesias, Huntington's disease shows benefit from tetraabenazine and is little improved by anticholinergics. Claims are made that a course of levodopa/carbidopa may improve tardive dyskinesia. Another paper claims benefit of this intractable condition by reserpine or tetraabenazine as presynaptic dopamine blockade. Cervical cord stimulation achieves some measure of success in athetosis-dystonia in cerebral palsy.

Overall, this book has something of interest in this fascinating field for most neurologists. But the wordy introductions, each telling the same well known tale of the failures of levodopa and its side effects, are monotonous and cry out for the heavier use of the editorial red pencil. Herein lies the main problem of books of this type. Superficially they appear to be a collection of essays or articles by selected writers; but closer scrutiny shows they are no more than proceedings of a sponsored international conference: in this case with neither place nor date given. Readers are all too familiar with the hastily prepared and scantily edited manuscripts which stem from these sources. In this instance the distinguished editors have made the most of the material (in itself, excellent in parts), and the quality of the publisher's text and illustrations is high.

Unfortunately, despite these merits, the resulting format is not always intelligible, succinct and coherent in style. One is left with a valuable collection of factual material, (though much of it is available elsewhere) with too much repetition and too many stylistic infelicities for comfortable digestion.

Is it not time that medical publishers and medical scientists realised that you can have a useful, informative and interesting conference or symposium without the obligation to put it in print?

JMS PEARCE

Immunology of the Nervous System (No 17 Current Topics in Immunology Series). By S Leibowitz and RAC Hughes. (Pp 304; £22.50.) London: Edward Arnold, 1983.

The modern clinical neurologist relies more and more on laboratory investigations in making his diagnosis and initiating specific treatment. Indeed, the art of clinical neurology progresses in parallel with the new knowledge obtained in the basic sciences. Neuroimmunology, the study in

health and disease of the interaction between the nervous and immune systems, is perhaps the most popular and potentially rewarding of the new specialities. The neurologist who neglects this field does so at his cost but Drs Leibowitz and Hughes have made his instruction easy and pleasant in their book. There is good coverage of clinical aspects of neuroimmunology, with the correct emphasis being laid on what the clinician needs to know. Controversy is avoided and the style is clear and restrained. Common neuroimmunological disorders, such as multiple sclerosis and myasthenia gravis, are discussed in detail and there is an excellent account of the immunological features of nervous system infections. A good description of tumour immunity and a chapter on recent advances in neurobiology, are included. Helpful chapters on basic immunology precede discussions on the use of laboratory models for human, immune-mediated, neurological diseases. The illustrations are good and the material is comprehensive but compactly presented. The authors, a professional immunologist and a clinical neurologist, are to be congratulated on putting together a book which will appeal to neurologists, general physicians and all with an interest in up-to-date clinical neurology.

PETER O BEHAN

Cerebrovascular Diseases. Thirteenth Research (Princeton) Conference. Edited by Martin Reivich and Howard I Hurtig. (Pp 457; \$90.52.) New York: Raven Press, 1983.

The first Princeton conference on cerebrovascular disease was held in 1954 and was a pioneering effort in the field of small closed conferences on special subjects. It has been held every second or third year since and publication of the proceedings has made a considerable contribution to education in the field. This contribution will be greatly reduced if future volumes, like the present, appear more than a year after the meeting. The field is changing so rapidly that accounts of the state of the art in, for example, NMR or PET scanning a year ago are of little value.

There are, however, more enduring contributions. Hachinski's survey of prognostic factors, separated into asymptomatic, warning, acute and recovery phases, is extremely helpful. It is also useful to know that asymptomatic carotid bruits carry little risk of stroke, and, for those concerned with community prevention programmes,

that the occurrence of TIAs can be reliably identified by means of a questionnaire.

On the scientific side the inclusion of a section on intravascular factors reflects the current movement away from the vessel wall to haemorrhological and other factors affecting the behaviour of the blood. This is encouraging as being more likely to offer therapeutic possibilities.

The standard of production is high with good illustrations. The dust cover says the volume "will be a vital stimulus to all researchers studying cerebrovascular disease"; it is unfortunate it will be a delayed stimulus.

JOHN MARSHALL

Lumbar Spine Surgery. Indications, Techniques, Failures and Alternatives. Edited by Joseph C Cauthen. (Pp 225; £33.50.) Baltimore: Williams & Wilkins, 1983.

Recently there has been a plethora of books dealing with the treatment of degenerative disorders of the spine from a surgical point of view. This appears to reflect the increasing appreciation of the fact that the management of patients with these conditions is considerably more complex than was once thought. The advent of improved radiological information from CT scanning and from water soluble contrast myelography has also contributed to a revival of interest in what has often been thought of as a relatively dull and humdrum branch of neurosurgery.

This present volume is an edited and revised version of several papers presented to a symposium held at Gainesville, Florida, in 1980. The topics discussed include lumbar spondylosis and stenosis, high resolution CT scanning of the lumbar spine, patient selection for disc surgery, microdiscectomy, posterior lumbar interbody fusion and also the general use of spinal fusion in lumbar degenerative disease, chemonucleolysis, spinal infections and two chapters on failed back surgery. It will be seen that virtually all aspects of the field which are currently subjects of interest and controversy have been covered.

This book is well produced and well edited. The illustrations are relevant, numerous and of the very highest quality. On the whole the chapters are succinct, well written and concentrate on the key issues. Most of the contributors show a sensible and thoughtful awareness of the many difficult problems involved in the management of this group of patients and of the importance of not adding to that