very large pool of people whose lives have been made worse by injudicious back surgery. As one contributor points out, the number of patients in this group is steadily increasing as a failed back operation does not lead to a decreased life span. The situation may in some respects be worse than that produced by cancer for at least in the latter condition death removes a number of unhappy and unsatisfied patients for whom the medical profession can do nothing.

It is a pleasure to be able to recommend a book which this reviewer has found to be both informative and stimulating. All those with a special interest in the surgery of the spine will find much that is of value and interest within it.

RS MAURICE-WILLIAMS

Cerebral Vascular Disease. Butterworths International Medical Reviews Neurology 3. Edited by Michael G Harrison, Mark L Dyken. (Pp 414; £23.00.) Sevenoaks: Butterworths, 1983

In this book it is the aim of the editors to provide readers with a background against which they may have a clear view of the advances in understanding and management of cerebrovascular disease which may take place over the next few years. With the aid of workers prominent in the field the development of thought and knowledge about intra- and extra-cranial vascular disease is traced from historical times until about mid-1982. It is this that makes this book different from the seemingly ever-increasing number of publications under the general heading of strokes. It is not a series of individuals describing their particular views on aetiology or mechanisms, or the results of their particular inconclusive multicentre trial of therapy, but a series of reviews, by critical yet receptive authors, of the work that has been, and is, going on throughout the world. These reviews highlight the pitfalls many investigators may fall into, and the difficulties inherent in bringing different people, different hospitals, and different countries into one supposedly unified study. The bibliography on which the chapters are based is excellent, indeed at times awe-inspiring. Two chapters (blood-flow and cerebral metabolism, and on the pathophysiology of cerebral ischaemia) combine their references which number just under 500. In addition to these the first part of the book—"fundamental concepts"—considers the nature of atheroma, its relationship to cerebro-vascular disease,

epidemiology, and the influence of hypertension. Hypertension does at least appear to be unanimously accepted as a vital influence in strokes, which is more than can be said for most other deviations from the normal, but the question is raised whether we are too obsessed with the diastolic pressure, when marked variations in the systolic may in this context be of more immediate relevance. In the clinical section, those reviewing trials of preventative therapy all appear to be waiting the results of further trials, and it becomes abundantly clear how important it is to know the natural history of strokes and cerebrovascular disease generally. The un-natural history as one of the editors terms it, for it is almost impossible to obtain a series of cases which are not in some way influenced by therapeutic attempts, is still far from established, and even more difficult, is changing, so that "the very soil is moving" beneath the feet of the investigators, and this of course is particularly relevant to some glowing accounts that have appeared of methods of prophylaxis and treatment, particularly in the sphere of surgical reconstruction or anastomosis. The authors go to considerable lengths to avoid falling into this trap and review the very wide range of methods of investigation available, and indications for them, their limitations and possible hazards, and the action, medical or surgical, that should or should not follow the results, and these chapters should be studied very carefully. I still find myself slightly bemused by the terms invasive, and non-invasive. Are we so sure that subjecting our neurons to string magnetic fields is non-invasive? Having recently had to sign a document certifying that I was not wearing an intra-uterine contraceptive device before being admitted to the Presence of a new NMR machine, I sometimes wonder. Ischaemia however is not the only topic dealt with in detail in this book, for chapters are devoted to venous infarction, intracerebral haematoma, and subarachnoid haemorrhage. The importance of evacuation of cerebellar haematoma, and the use of stereotactic methods in deep thalamic stem haematoma, *in appropriate patients*, are emphasised, and the doubts as to the value of anti-fibrinolytic agents in the prevention of re-bleeding in subarachnoid haemorrhages are justifiably brought to the fore.

It is a very distinguished team who have co-operated to write this book, which has miraculously avoided the repetitiveness so often found in multi-authorship publications, and this must be a credit to the

editors. It is perhaps a little too detailed for the general reader, but for the neurologist, neurosurgeon, and vascular surgeon, it is compulsive, and some might think, compulsory reading.

EDWIN R BICKERSTAFF

The Affective Disorders. Edited by John M Davis and James W Mass. (Pp 443; \$27.50.) Washington: American Psychiatric Press Inc, 1983

This is the proceedings of yet another drug company sponsored conference on depression. In this case the company was Upjohn and the meeting took place in Kalamazoo, Michigan in October 1981. Doubtless the conference was enjoyable and even valuable to the participants themselves. But it is not worth reading about two years later. Those of the sixty contributors with something important to say had either published elsewhere before the conference was held or have done so by now. Anyone who happens to glance through this particular volume will learn that the mode of action of tricyclic antidepressants is still a mystery, and that the best treatment to give someone with a severe depression which has failed to respond to an adequate trial both of a tricyclic drug and of ECT is still anyone's guess. He will also be somewhat disappointed to learn that if affective disorders are genetically transmitted they should be more prevalent in monozygous than dizygous twins, and the Kallmann's old twin study is still considered "the definitive work" in the field of affective disorder. If you want accurate and up to date information about affective disorders read Paykel's Handbook instead.

R E KENDELL

Neuropsychological Assessment. Second Edition. By MD Lezak. (Pp 768; £22.50.) New York: Oxford University Press, 1983.

This is a much expanded and up-dated version of the first edition which was published in 1976. The first 240 pages are devoted to what is probably the most detailed and comprehensive account currently available of the theory and practice of neuropsychological assessment. In addition to fairly standard chapters on neuroanatomy and neuropathology, there are sections dealing with the rationale of deficit measurement and the procedures and interpretation involved in neuropsychological examinations, which have a great deal to