inferior olivary nucleus would seem to play a crucial part in the pathophysiology of palatal myoclonus. It receives afferent fibres from a wide range of structures, including the cerebral cortex,⁴ caudate nucleus, red nucleus, cerebellum and spinal cord.⁵ The gracile and cuneate nuclei project into the anterior cerebellum directly and indirectly via the basilar pons and inferior olive.⁵

As Corbin and Williams¹ have suggested, afferent impulses triggered by neck posture could, by projections to the inferior olive, influence the reverberating circuit which underlies palatal myoclonus. If this is the case, the projections seem influential in only a small proportion of patients with palatal myoclonus, and a particular head posture is not relevant in this respect. Conceivably,

subtle changes in palatal myoclonus triggered by head posture are more common, but only detectable by electrophysiological techniques.

SW ROCHE

GD PERKIN

Regional Neurosciences Centre,
Charing Cross Hospital,
Fulham Palace Road,
London
W6 8RF, UK.

References

- 1 Corbin D, Williams AC. Palatal myoclonus

influenced by posture. *J Neurol, Neurosurg Psychiatry* 1987;**50**:366.

- 2 Jacobs L, Newton RP, Bozian D. Disappearing palatal myoclonus. *Neurology* 1981;**31**:784-9.
- 3 Guillain G, Mollaret P. Deux cas de myoclonies synchrones et rythmées velopharyngo-laryngo-oculo-diaphragmatiques. Le problème anatomique et physiopathologique de ce syndrome. *Rev Neurol (Paris)* 1931;**11**:545-66.
- 4 Berkley KJ, Warden IG. Projections to inferior olive of cat: 1. comparisons of input from the dorsal column nuclei, the lateral cervical nucleus, the spine-olivary pathways, the cerebellum, and the cerebellum. *J Comp Neurol* 1978;**180**:237-51.
- 5 Mehler WR, Feferman ME, Nauta WJH. Ascending axon degeneration following anterolateral cordotomy. An experimental study in the monkey. *Brain* 1960;**83**:718-50.

Book reviews

Parkinson's Disease. (*Advances in Neurology Vol 45*). Edited by Melvin D Yahr, Kenneth J Bergmann. (Pp 680; \$113.50.) New York: Raven Press, 1986.

Here is another conference symposium in the grand style. But it is one with a difference—thanks to the shrewd foresight of its well known editors we are spared the exhaustive exegesis of unintelligible technology which exudes like some opaque excrescence from so many modern conferences. We are not subjected to a morass of badly written, hastily compiled conclusions padding out the very latest numerical and graphic data in ill-digested form. Each of the contributors has presented an overview of current developments, illustrated by a sample of his recent investigations.

Over 500 participants from 28 countries took part, we are told, but mercifully not all were required to share the fruits of their ephemeral knowledge with readers of this volume. There are four major themes: epidemiological and aetiological factors; biochemical and ultrastructural pathology; motor and non-motor aspects of Parkinson's disease; and, current and future approaches to therapy.

The result is a truly up to date, lucid review of the subject, heavily laden with modern techniques and seminal data which will appeal not only to research workers, but to the jobbing clinical neurologist who seeks further understanding of this intriguing and still bewildering complex of motor and neuropsychological disorder. It is well

presented with good illustrations and tabular material. The authors provide valuable information over almost the entire field so that it is invidious to pick out some of the many topics which are important, yet which so frequently escape attention in less comprehensive anthologies. The editors are to be congratulated on managing to distil such a useful compendium which (price apart) deserves a wide readership.

JMS PEARCE

Congenital Disorders and Infections and Cancer. Handbook of the Spinal Cord Vols 4 & 5. Edited by Robert A Davidoff. (Pp 848; \$149.75 USA & Canada; \$179.50 others.) New York: Marcel Dekker, 1987.

These are the final two volumes in a series of five which extensively cover the anatomical, physiological, biochemical, pharmacological and clinical aspects of spinal cord function and dysfunction. It is a multi author series and as such the quality of the chapters shows some variability. Volumes 4 and 5 cover congenital and traumatic disorders in part I and infections and cancer in part II. In total there are twenty chapters with seven hundred and seventy nine pages including an extensive author and subject index.

The first chapter sets the clinical tone of the book and illustrates with many references the basic spinal cord syndromes as they present in practice. The following four chapters are concerned with spinal cord trauma including the pathophysiological mechanisms occurring during injury, and

spinal cord regeneration. The chapter on spinal cord trauma and its early clinical management is very good. It has, perhaps, a slight bias towards operative intervention but nevertheless places this in its true context and is not blind to the substantial evidence in the literature which indicates that early intervention rarely improves neurological function with the exception of a few uncommon clinical situations. It includes the use of computed tomography and MRI which is not yet freely available to Spinal Injury Centres in the UK. Whether this high technology in radiological investigation will make any difference to the ultimate outcome, remains to be seen. The chapter on neurophysiology of spinal spasticity was written at the theoretical and investigational level. I was disappointed that there was no clinical section dealing with the problems of management of painful spinal spasticity following traumatic paraplegia.

There is an adequate but not over-inspiring chapter on cervical spondylosis and stenosis which covered most aspects of this common condition. However, major omissions concerned the natural history and progression of the disease process and there was little or no mention of MRI in cervical degenerative disease. I found this slightly surprising considering the author works in a major unit in San Francisco. Nevertheless the illustrations were of high quality and the chapter was extremely well referenced.

For the remainder of part I my interest waned slightly when confronted with an over-view of inherited disorders of the spinal cord, neural tube defects and autonomic nervous system diseases of the spinal cord. Nevertheless these provide a valuable source