are eight sections: the contributions of the President and the Honoured Guest, Perspectives in Neurosurgery, Cerebrovascular surgery, Paediatric neurosurgery, Spinal surgery, Intracranial tumours, Infections and Neurosurgical treatment of vertigo.

The underlying theme of the book is controversy in neurosurgery. The second section deals with decision making and in particular the implications of a competitive market system not only for neurosurgical management but upon medical education and research. The potential effects upon neurosurgical training programmes are discussed by the President. The ethical, legal, and medical considerations of a decision not to treat are discussed in relationship to the competence of the patient. The playwright Brian Clark in discussing the patient's role, concludes that the population at large, including the medical profession, must come to terms with its own mortality before a patient can take a full and confident role in the making of a decision. Such considerations will become increasingly important to practitioners in Britain as we are required continuously to improve the cost effectiveness of our decisions and face the legal consequences thereof.

The remaining sections deal with more specific neurosurgical problems and often writers present contrary views. Topics covered include: aneurysm surgery (the questions of incidental aneurysms, use of antifibrinolytic agents, and the timing of surgery); the management of unruptured arteriovenous malformations; the surgery and management of ischaemic vascular disease including asymptomatic carotid disease and extracranial-intracranial bypass in the light of the multicentre EC-IC Bypass Study; the evaluation of in utero treatment of hydrocephalus and the advocacy of a more aggressive surgical policy in the management of myelomeningocele than that widely in vogue in Britain; chemoneurolysis versus lumbar microdiscectomy, the latter versus conventional surgery and the place of lumbar fusion; the roles of surgery, radiotherapy and chemotherapy in cranioopharyngioma, prolactinoma, Cushing's disease and low grade astrocytoma; medical and surgical management of brain abscess and the use of prophylactic antibiotics; microvascular decompression or vestibular nerve section for vertigo.

This is an excellent book which should be read by all neurosurgical trainees and practising neurosurgeons. It is strongly bound and well produced on high quality paper with only the occasional typographical error. It is a pity that the price is so high, especially for a book which will inevitably be superceded by later volumes in the same series.


A whole volume devoted to the relatively rare syndrome of syringobulbia seems at first sight to be excessive and one's fears are increased when one realises the book is a translation of an original publication in French in 1932. But the fears are groundless; Syringobulbia by Dr Jonesco-Sisesti and translated by Professor RT Ross is neither excessive nor excessively verbose. Professor Ross explains in his introduction that Dr J Goodwin Greenfield brought the original to his attention many years ago and intimated that it should be translated into English.

The translator has succeeded admirably and the review of 100 patients culled from the literature prior to 1932 together with a further 11 from the records of the Salpetrière provides a solid foundation for a description of the anatomy, clinical features and pathology of syringobulbia. There are remarkably few aspects of clinical presentations, differential diagnosis and pathological anatomy in which the past 50 years has altered our knowledge but at the end of each chapter Professor Ross provides an addendum which reviews the literature of the intervening years and contains some personal opinions. The most evident change in the management of syringobulbia since the original publication is in the field of investigation and particularly the advent of non-invasive CT and MRI. Examples of these are furnished by the translator in a chapter dealing with differential diagnosis. The clarity of the scan pictures and of the sections of brain stem is a compliment to the publishers and whilst it is slightly annoying to be continually relating a description on one page to a photograph several pages away this does not detract greatly from the enjoyment of the book.

It cannot be claimed that Syringobulbia is essential reading for all students of neurology but it is a welcome addition to a neurology reference library. It is suggested that "knowledge which is not readily accessible soon becomes lost" and in this respect all those who are not fluent in French but who are interested in neurology will applaud Professor Ross for his effort.


The fact that this is the fourth edition since 1975 of this handy physician's guide is testimony to its worth and popularity in the United States. The well known editors assisted by ten specialist colleagues hope "to demonstrate a definitive approach to both the diagnosis and the treatment of headache. An attempt has been made to keep the text uncluttered, simple and easy to read and follow."

The book spans some 220 pages divided into 20 chapters. It is beautifully produced and illustrated. Between the hard covers there lies much sense and wisdom. Most of the major headache syndromes are covered and descriptions adequate for diagnostic purposes are provided. The advice about how to treat the patient is usually both detailed and explicit. It is easy to understand its popularity with general practitioners as a didactic text.

For the more critical there are areas where complex cocktails of drugs recommended will not find ready acceptance. The simplification of pathophysiology and the approach to management would not be agreed in many neurologists circles. Much attention is paid to "the somatization process," to biofeedback, relaxation training, aerobic conditioning and (no surprise) acupuncture is not forgotten. It may be that the British are too cautious, too conservative in our attempts to tackle what is often an intractable tangle of pain, invalidity and complex emotional and personality conflicts. The approach in this book is one of empiricism, backed one suspects by the sort of compelling urge to treat which patients of this type find irresistible.

The results are best judged by the preface "The reader may be assured that we and our colleagues have successfully treated many patients with headache. This is a book founded on clinical experience, for which there is no substitute."


The second edition of this manual of tech-