Operative Spinal Surgery Practice of Surgery Series. Edited by M J TORRENS AND R A DICKSON (Pp 333 Illustrated; Price: £90.00) 1991. Edinburgh, Churchill Livingstone. ISBN 0443 03922 4

This heavily illustrated book, one of a series on operative surgery, encompasses the spine, an extensive field on which both orthopaedic and neurosurgeons manoeuvre. The editors, one from each specialty, have chosen contributors from The United Kingdom, The United States, Australia and Switzerland to cover an area, extending from intramedullary spinal tumours to instrumentation and fusion for scoliosis. The 21 chapters are mainly organised according to the type of approach and the segment of the spine being dealt with. Thus early chapters consider trans-oral, anterior and posterior approaches to the cervical spine and various ways of approaching the thoracic and lumbar spine for disc disease. Specific topics are also dealt with, for instance, the spine in rheumatoid arthritis and in ankylosing spondylitis. Though intramedullary and extradural spinal tumours are considered, intradural, extramedullary tumours are not. There are excellent chapters on syringomyelia and pain.

The subject matter is not confined to operative detail though this is very well dealt with, for there are excellent introductory sections of a general sort in each chapter. The way in which the material is edited means that there is very little dead wood and most chapters can be read with profit and with little need to skip obvious or elementary material. The style achieves a uniformity and clarity which makes reading easy. Especially good are the chapters on far-lateral disc protrusion by Fankhauser and de Tribolet and those written by the neurosurgical editor, Michael Torrens. Only the chapter by Williams on microdiscectomy does not greatly appeal being written in a somewhat pious, euphoric and sweeping style in which conclusions are reached which not everyone would think self-evident. The trans-thoracic operation for thoracic disc advocated by Findlay seems more radical than most people would consider performing.

Peter Fox's illustrations are a notable feature. They are copious and excellent, being both artistically pleasing and practically informative. The book can be extremely strongly recommended and will be of great use to trainees in both of the specialties for which it is intended.

TT KING

Neuro-Oncology. Edited by P PAOLETTI, K TAKAKURA, M D WALKER, G BUTTI AND S PEZZOTTA (Pp 406; Price: Dfl 250.00, US\$ 142.50, UK£85.00) 1991. Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Publishers Group. ISBN 0 792 31215 5

This is the most recent in a series of over sixty volumes concerning "Developments in Oncology". It contains the proceedings of the International Symposium on Neuro-Oncology held in Italy in September 1990. Over 500 participants attended this meeting and a varied series of papers were presented covering a great many areas of importance to brain tumour treatment and research. The majority of contributions concerned primary

malignant brain tumours in adults and children. In addition to this some papers were presented concerning meningiomas and neuromas as well as concerning the treatment of complications of brain tumours like raised intracranial pressure and hydrocephalus. For convenience the book has been divided into six sections, the most extensive of which are those concerned with the biology and diagnosis of brain tumours, the therapy of gliomas, and brain tumours in children.

In general the book is well produced but there is a variation in standard of typography and illustration because, in order to speed production, the individual ready to print contributions have been used and not reset.

Overall it produces a very useful summary of recent developments and current thoughts in this field for the early 1990s. In particular, recent exciting developments in molecular tumour biology and in neuro-imaging are well covered. It will be very useful as a source of ideas and references for serious workers, either clinical or scientific, in neuro-oncology. Although it is unlikely that individual neuroscientists outside this field will wish to purchase the book themselves, because it is relatively expensive, it should find a place in most departmental libraries in institutions where brain tumours are investigated and treated.

D G T THOMAS

Preserve Your Love for Science. (Life of Wm A. Hammond, American Neurologist). By BONNIE ELLEN BLUSTEIN (Pp 289; Price H/B £35.00, \$54.95). Cambridge University Press. 1992. ISBN 0 521 39262 4

The title of this interesting book comes from William A Hammond's 1867 address to medical students when he said "You must sacrifice something on the altar of expediency if you wish to become successful; only take care that you preserve your love for science". While I knew something of Hammond's work as he was one of the first US neurologists and a founder of the American Neurological Association, I was not aware that he was also an ardent natural historian and that he did some original research in physiological chemistry. For financial reasons, he joined the US Army Medical Department after graduation and soon made important original contributions which led to his rapid promotion so that in his early thirties, in 1862, he became Surgeon General.

The sweeping changes which he introduced, including his decision to remove calomel and tartar from the official drug list of the Service, made him increasingly unpopular in some quarters, though others hailed his appointment as a great success. Nevertheless, his political enemies engineered his court martial, a decision which he welcomed as he felt certain the court would clear his name. To his astonishment it found against him and he was dismissed in 1864. The Army's loss was, however, neurology's gain; he established a specialist neurological practice in New York and was soon extremely successful. His book "A Treatise on Disorders of the Nervous System" (1871) was immediately popular and ran to eight editions. Although he endorsed therapeutic fads such as suspension treatment and electrotherapy, he was a very popular consultant and an outstanding diagnostician. However,

his espousal of the use of tissue extracts in treatment, following Brown-Séquard, was another enthusiasm which was misconceived.

Professional historians often look with disfavour upon the writings of medical amateurs, criticising the discursive narrative style of their books and papers. But many doctors find some works by historians detailed, heavily referenced and difficult to read. That criticism could not apply to this book, which I found readable and in places fascinating. The only minor flaw I spotted was the reference to Brown-Séquard as "the French neurologist". Admittedly he worked in France, but also in London and in the United States and was born in Mauritius, the product of a marriage between an American sea-captain, Captain Brown, and a French planter's daughter, Mlle. Séquard.

JOHN WALTON

Stenosis of the Cervical Spine. Causes, Diagnosis and Treatment. By ENZO DENARO. (Pp 303 Illustrated; Price: DM 348.00). Heidelberg, Springer-Verlag. 1991. ISBN 3 540 53328 1

This book is of orthopaedic provenance and, although largely written by Professor Denaro, contains contributions from other authors, French, Italian and North American. Its scope is both wider and narrower than its title suggests. Cervical stenosis, for the authors, comprises all pathological conditions leading to "a disparity between the size of the spinal cord and that of the canal encompassing the cord" and includes all the pathological conditions leading to this, including tumours, inflammatory disease and trauma, as well as the more obvious degenerative joint disease. However, nearly three-quarters of the book is devoted to operative technique and the result is more a manual of operative surgery than a treatise on a pathological condition. The clinical, radiological and electrophysiological chapters are relatively brief and, while, in the case of the clinical sections, are adequate, they do not illuminate greatly a rather well exposed subject.

The chapter on anatomy and pathology is handsomely illustrated with coloured pictures of injected specimens and there is an interesting chapter on the biomechanics of cervical myelopathy.

The operative section is accompanied by many detailed drawings. Standard operations are well presented and equal space and lavishness of illustration is given to less usual procedures, and some remarkable ones. There is a long chapter by Kehr of Strasbourg on anterolateral operations to decompress the cervical nerve root and vertebral artery for the relief of various symptoms attributed to the compression of the latter by osteophytes. The rather frequent use of exclamation marks in this chapter suggests the author expects a degree of disbelief by his readers.

Generally the operative sections are well done and contain a number of useful practical tips. The index is poor.

This book cannot be very strongly recommended, especially as there are superior rivals available.

TT KING