Book reviews


The publication of an English translation of Rio-Hortega's monograph on tumours of the nervous system has an assured welcome. Neuroanatomists, neurophysiologists, and neuropathologists will applaud this edition as a tribute to a distinguished pioneer whose patient work of outstanding originality forms part of the foundations of their speciality. In addition to this fitting recognition the present publication makes available to a wider public of pathologists and oncologists the bulk of Rio-Hortega's observations on tumours of the nervous system, observations based on the application to tumours of those silver staining techniques that were Hortega's special genius. Though much of Hortega's work has passed into current textbooks it is refreshing to read his original deliberations and to note where he took an independent line, which may yet prove fruitful.

The translation is into excellent contemporary prose and the selected figures amply justify their inclusion. The general format is most pleasing.

J. TREVOR HUGHES


This is a wholly admirable monograph on a subject which concerns orthopaedic surgeons and any others who may be involved in the treatment of injuries. As pathologist to the Birmingham Accident Hospital, the author has had a vast experience of fat embolism in all its manifestations, and the record of his experience leaves little to be said. The main emphasis is on the pathological features, but there are good chapters on the clinical aspects, diagnosis, and treatment. The section on treatment begins with Skirving's statement in 1882 that 'treatment (is) of little avail... prophylaxis, as little handling of the injured parts as possible'. Dr. Sevitt says that little can be added to this, although supportive measures such as the administration of oxygen and antibiotics, and modern methods of managing the comatose patient (such as tracheostomy and control of fluid and electrolyte balance) may save some patients and improve the quality of survival in others.

J. PENNYBACKER


This book contains a series of talks given at the opening of the Brain Research Institute of the University of California. The names of the contributors, which include Kety, Magoun, Percival Bailey, Gaddum, and Geoffrey Harris amongst others, suggests that the standard of these essays will be high. Harris's review of neuroendocrinology and its very wide ramifications is one amongst many excellent contributions. The book is enlivened by some pictures of earlier and famous neurologists. The book can be recommended as a short review of research activity on cerebral function in its wider sense.


Magnesium metabolism has, until recent years, been a comparatively neglected topic, despite the indications from physiologists, enzymologists, and others of its importance in cell processes. The development of more satisfactory flame-photometric processes for the estimation of small amounts of magnesium in biological materials has, however, opened up the subject, and interest in it is now developing fast.

Dr. Hänze's small monograph is a useful compilation of much of the background information that we now possess about the part that magnesium plays in cell processes. It is divided into two main sections, the physiology of magnesium metabolism and the clinical aspects and applications. The first of these deals with the distribution of magnesium in the animal body, with its uptake, transport, and excretion, and with its importance in the cell. The second surveys briefly the syndrome of magnesium deficiency in animals and in man, and also the few available facts which we possess concerning disturbances of magnesium metabolism in different diseases.

JAMES BULL
FAT EMBOLISM

J. Pennybacker

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