Book reviews

CURRENT TOPICS IN MICROBIOLOGY AND IMMUNOLOGY
Vol. 40. Chronic Infectious Neuropathic Agents
(CHINA) and other Slow Virus Infections. Edited by
J. A. Brody, W. Henle, and H. Koprowski. (Pp. viii + 74; 22 figures. DM 32.00; U.S.$8.00). Springer-

Baffling diseases such as disseminated sclerosis and 'degenerative' diseases of the nervous system are fertile
fields for propagation of fashionable theories. Lack of
substantial evidence for an autoimmune mechanism and
increasing recognition of epidemiological features
compatible with infection have led to renewed search
for infective agents. In the past this has not been a re-
warding search, because the natural history and pathol-
ogy of these diseases were so unlike recognized infections.
Now the position is quite different. Two degenerative
diseases of the CNS of sheep, visna and scrapie, have
been shown to be transmissible. This was missed before
because of the remarkably long latent period and the
species or strain specificity of the host animal (again
resembling disseminated sclerosis). Surprising findings
in both of these diseases are that the brain or cord may
show no evidence of inflammation and that antibody
formation cannot be detected by present methods.

In the human, kuru shows striking resemblances to
scrapie. It has been transmitted by serial passage in the
chimpanzee by intracerebral inoculation of brain sus-
pension from affected human subjects. Limitation to one
tribe may be due to genetic pleomorphism (low ATP-ase)
or to hyper-infection by cannibalism at a particular age.
Although kuru has not yet been passaged by cell-free
filtrates, there is no evidence that the disease is trans-
mittable by an immunological mechanism. Autoimmune
phenomena do occur in the related Ateutian disease of
mink and may be a factor in the others. Nevertheless, in
all of these diseases the evidence for an infective agent is
strong. It must have very unusual properties of slow but
continuing damage to invaded cells. This has given rise
to the name 'slow virus'.

Recognition of these agents opens a wide field for
renewed research in 'degenerative diseases'. It is particularly
interesting that they tend to be neuropathic, but there is
still no evidence that they are related to any human dis-
bane other than kuru. Those interested in a brief intro-
duction to this field are recommended to read this short
book which contains eight papers presented at a sym-
posium in Los Angeles in 1966. Further advances are sure
to follow and many will feel that the cost is excessive
for a survey of this nature, though all the papers are well
presented.

J. A. SIMPSON

THE MANAGEMENT OF CEREBROVASCULAR DISEASE.

Great advances in understanding of the various factors
involved in cerebrovascular disease have emerged from
the development particularly of intracranial angiography,
but unfortunately these advances in knowledge have led
to relatively little practical improvement in the methods
of treatment, and the new tests that are available all
carry risks to the patient which are difficult to assess.
These cerebral catastrophes are however very common,
and this volume gives a clear and practical account of
existing knowledge, and describes a sensible approach to
therapeutic possibilities.

Dr. Marshall's presentation is particularly helpful in
relation to his classification of firstly the various types
of 'completed' stroke, and then the stroke-in-evolution,
the transient ischaemic attacks, and the part played by
carotid artery stenosis.

THE ELECTRICAL ACTIVITY OF THE NERVOUS SYSTEM 3rd
Ed. By Mary A. B. Brazier. (Pp. xiv + 317; 151
figures, 1 table, 6 plates. 45s.). Pitman: London. 1968.

It is eight years since the previous edition and, at the
expense of some forty additional pages, Dr. Brazier has
revised this work to cover the considerable knowledge
that has accumulated. The value of the book is well
described by its sub-title 'A textbook for students'.
The text is clear with good illustrations. Each section
may be read independently and is provided with a bibli-
ography. For the student entering upon the subject of
neurophysiology and for those seeking to revise their
knowledge this book is excellent.

A. F. LEWIS

BRAIN, BEHAVIOR AND EVOLUTION Vol. 1, No. 1. (Pp. 90;
illustrated. S. Fr. 78.00; $18.60—for six numbers).

'Brain, Behavior and Evolution meets the widespread
need for an outlet which allows realistic interdisciplinary
interaction between those interested in the organization
of the nervous system and those interested in the organiza-
tion of behavior'. So says the introduction to the first
volume of this new journal. But if people with these
interests wish to interact, they can already do so by
reading each other's journals; and it is generally easier to
maintain high average quality in a journal that is centred
on one established discipline than in one that covers two
weakly linked disciplines. An interdisciplinary journal
might be useful if its editors made great efforts to attract
those rare papers that really unite two subjects; though
there is no lack of existing outlets for these exceptional
and distinguished writings, for they are already welcomed
by all editors. In default of such jewels, my ideal inter-
disciory journal would accept only papers in each
discipline with more than average relevance to the other.

The first number of Brain, Behavior and Evolution does
not, by this standard, do very well. It contains no inter-
disciplinary paper. Of the four papers in it, one is on
behaviour, and is indeed of more interest to the neuro-
CURRENT TOPICS IN MICROBIOLOGY AND IMMUNOLOGY Vol. 40. Chronic Infectious Neuropathic Agents (CHINA) and other Slow Virus Infections

J. A. Simpson

J Neurol Neurosurg Psychiatry 1968 31: 651
doi: 10.1136/jnnp.31.6.651

Updated information and services can be found at:
http://jnnp.bmj.com/content/31/6/651.1.citation

These include:

Email alerting service
Receive free email alerts when new articles cite this article. Sign up in the box at the top right corner of the online article.

Notes

To request permissions go to:
http://group.bmj.com/group/rights-licensing/permissions

To order reprints go to:
http://journals.bmj.com/cgi/reprintform

To subscribe to BMJ go to:
http://group.bmj.com/subscribe/