Book reviews


Appropriate examination of mental status is often neglected, even by those who should be most concerned—that is, neurologists and psychiatrists. Such neglect must stem in part from a lack of experience and confidence in this field, coupled with inability to relate abnormal findings to disordered anatomy and physiology.

This book has been written by a neurologist working in collaboration with a clinical psychologist. The authors' purpose is to emphasise worthwhile methods of examination and link them to underlying anatomical and physiological mechanisms. The three main objectives are first, to enable the examiner to undertake either a brief or detailed examination of mental status, second, to identify patients with organic brain disease and often to make specific diagnosis, and third, to identify residual strengths.

The various components of mental status examination are dealt with in separate chapters under the subheadings of terminology, evaluation, anatomy, and implicactions. The exposition is lucid and the advice practical. Adequate references to guide further reading are given at the end of each chapter. Appendix I lists a number of standard psychological tests with brief notes on the indications for, and interpretation, significance, and reliability of each test. Appendix 2 provides a suggested framework for a composite mental status examination.

This book is highly recommended as an introduction to an important but neglected topic.

W. F. DURWARD


The editor organised this book rather than a conference for technical reasons. The result is of more lasting value as he has brought together major reviews by leading research workers, with adequate space for comment and the informed speculation which is so helpful to others. B. W. Fulpius describes the recent remarkable developments on cholinergic receptors made possible by affinity chromatography. Application of this powerful tool to central receptors awaitst recognition of suitable ligands. Possible clues may come from clinical cases of toxic encephalopathy. B. Katz and R. Miledi describe the analysis of endplate noise as a new approach to the study of ACh/receptor interaction. J. Heuser on synaptic vesicle morphology and dynamics, R. Rahaminoff on the role of calcium on transmitter release, and L. G. Magazanik and F. Vyskocil on desensitisation at the neuromuscular junction, write on topics which are well understood but still have tantalising gaps. Edith Heilbron desrcibes the effects of immunisation with nicotinic ACh receptor ("experimental autoimmune myasthenia gravis"). Of less interest to clinicians but of major importance to the experimentalist are studies on the receptor proteins of arthropods (G. G. Lunt), excitatory and inhibitory transmission in crayfish (A. Takeuchi), and L-glutamate receptors in locusts (S. G. Cull-Candy) which are about GABA and glutamate transmitters, but studies on these easily accessible synapses must pave the way for similar work on central synapses believed to be present in higher animals. The controversy about neurotrophic functions as distinct from the role of activity with regard to differentiation of muscle fibres is well discussed in two chapters by T. Lómo and E. Gutmann, marred at the very end by ectopia of the references.

J. A. SIMPSON

Understanding the Stretch Reflex Progress in Brain Research Volume 44 Edited by S. Homma. (Pp. 507; illustrated; Dfl.145.00, $57.95.) Elsevier Scientific Publishing Company: Amsterdam, Oxford, and New York. 1976. A collection of lectures and presentations at an international symposium held in Tokyo in 1975 is more than usually rewarding owing to the very high standing of the participants. Almost all of the most active researchers on the muscle spindle and its reflexes were present. An opening address by Evarts and Granit on the relations of reflexes and extended movements emphasising polysynaptic stretch reflexes, and a lecture by the organiser (Professor Homma) on frequency characteristics of the impulse decoding ratio between spinal afferents and efferents in the stretch reflex, are followed by 10 papers on muscle spindle and its fusimotor innervation. The dialogue between Barker and Boyd is not yet...
The Mental Status Examination in Neurology

W. F. Durward

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