

Book reviews

biochemistry of hormone action and the electrophysiological effects of steroid hormone also receive attention. The neural pathways through which pituitary function may be influenced are reviewed in general terms, and an interesting feature of the book is the inclusion of a guide to the peripheral reproductive neuroanatomy of the rat. Perhaps this foreshadows renewed interest in the direct neural control of genital function. By comparison with the space devoted to the female the male receives short shrift, but this is a minor quibble and the book is enthusiastically recommended. Indeed, the good news is that a paperback version is available at the very reasonable cost of \$18.95. It deserves wide circulation.

B DONOVAN

Year Book of Psychiatry and Applied Mental Health 1981. Edited by Daniel X Freedman, Arnold J Friedhoff, Lawrence C Kolb, Reginald S Lourie, John C Nemiah, and John Romano. (Pp 374; £31.00.) London: Year Book Medical Publishers, 1981.

Yearbooks are valuable reference works for many people involved in a particular discipline. They provide brief reviews of the most relevant papers from the past 18 months, and cover a wide range of subsections such that specialists with individual interests are able to discover papers from journals that deal with related subjects that they are not able regularly to read. The 1981 Year Book of Psychiatry and Applied Mental Health, with six editors, provides such a useful compendium. Sections cover most of the wide spectrum that psychiatry today embraces from biochemistry to neurophysiology to child psychiatry and mental retardation to drug abuse and alcoholism. Prior to the précis of relevant papers, a brief introduction to progress in the field and reasons for the choice of papers is given by one of the editors. Some of these are of more interest and relevance than others, although for reasons unknown some sections appear without editorial comment.

The problem with this sort of book is that the papers reflect the editor's choice, and the interpretation of research findings may therefore be made to fit his Procrustean bed. Overall, however, this is a good book for dippers, reviewers and potential examination students. The cost

is quite prohibitive, and it will therefore probably find an outlet only in libraries. Publishers of such books should give thought to reproduction of a cheaper text that would be purchased and used by those who would get the most from it.

MICHAEL TRIMBLE

Central Nervous System Mechanisms in Hypertension (Perspectives in Cardiovascular Research, Volume 6). Edited by Joseph P Buckley and Carlos M Ferrario. (Pp 434; \$53.72.) New York: Raven Press, 1981.

This compilation of 34 contributions is published following a symposium at Houston, Texas, in May 1980, and adds up to an excellent account of many of the recent advances and current problems in the role of the central nervous system in the control of blood pressure. Progress on the anatomy physiology and pharmacology of brainstem and higher reflex pathways is reviewed and much apparently new experimental evidence presented. Most of the papers are quite short, and full of experimental detail such that in some areas the reader has to work hard to gain a wider view. Interesting advances such as the evidence for peripheral presynaptic modulation of noradrenaline release from sympathetic terminals, or the continuing saga of the evidence for a separate brain renin-angiotensin system are covered, although their treatment is scattered amongst a number of contributors.

In a book like this, dealing with central nervous control of a variable that is subject to many influences, I would have liked to see a contribution or two devoted to a systems approach. There are aspects of hypertension in which it might be particularly valuable; for example, in the analysis of the complex actions of clonidine, affecting as it does both the set-point and the gain of the baroreflex, as well as the efficacy of the sympathetic nerves (by a presynaptic agonist action). Again, the contrasting functions of the brain renin-angiotensin system and the renal renin-angiotensin system could reward a systems approach.

The book is well-produced and well-illustrated, with full references at the end of each contribution. There is a 10-page subject index.

D RUSHTON

The Neuropsychiatric Mental Status Examination. By Michael Alan Taylor. (Pp 508; £8.95.) Lancaster: MTP Press Ltd, 1981.

For various reasons examination of the neuropsychiatric mental state of patients is often poorly covered in the training of both psychiatrists and neurologists. Although there are many available books which cover this topic, a satisfactory teaching manual has still to be developed. The author of this book has produced "a programmed text" as one attempt to fill this gap. It is composed of 474 separate paragraphs, each numbered, some of which ask a question, although most leave key words missing from the text which are then to be filled in by the reader. The paragraphs are presented on the left-hand page and the answers on the right, and it is expected that the blanks will be filled in, and that on making an error the reader will return in the text to the items that have already explained the correct response.

The emphasis of the presentation is on exact descriptions of phenomenology drawing particularly from the writings of Jaspers, Schneider, and Fish, although disorders of memory, speech, and separate considerations of frontal lobe and parietal lobe dysfunction are considered. In the second part of the text, differential diagnosis is covered which includes the presentation of a number of brief case histories from which the key diagnostic features have to be selected. Course brain disease, anxiety state, hysteria, obsessional disorders, alcoholism and personality disorders are also covered, the diagnostic framework for these being taken from the new DSM-III classification. In the final section case histories are once again given in order that the reader can test diagnostic skills that he has gleaned in the preceding pages.

Although inevitably in a book of this sort there will be individual criticisms of the content, for example such comments as "staccato speech if often a sign of psychomotor epilepsy", it is an instructive manual for those in training who wish to improve their knowledge and technique of the mental status examination, and the interested will find in it the meaning of such terms as "veraguth folds, mitmachen, and apophany".

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The Neuropsychiatric Mental Status Examination

Michael Trimble

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