its contents which makes it difficult for the reader to find his way around and by intro-
ductive sections to some of the chapters which are frankly confusing. Clarity of
exposition seems to have been sacrificed for the sake of brevity, a sacrifice which
need not have been made for such a short book. As the book is presumably (the
authors are not clear on this point) intended for the surgeon who operates on
the spine relatively infrequently, the indications for the various operations, and
postoperative management and complications, could perhaps have been dealt with
at greater length. Especially in the field of degenerative disease and trauma, the occa-
sional spinal surgeon can do a great deal of mischief and nothing would have been lost
by devoting more space to spelling out the complexities and problems involved in
assessing patients prior to surgery. Many patients remain dissatisfied after spinal
surgery and this is more often because they should not have been operated on at all, or
the wrong operation was performed, than because the technique of the actual opera-
tion which was carried out was faulty.

RSM WILLIAMS

Mental Retardation and Congenital Mal-
formations of the Central Nervous System.
By Josef Warkany, Ronald J Lemire and
M Michael Cohen, Jr. (Pp 459; £47.50.)
London: Year Book Medical Publish-
ers Ltd, 1981.

This handsomely set out reference book
provides a valuable adjunct for both pathologists and clinicians to the already
available atlases of mental retardation syndromes. Based on a series of review
articles previously published in the annual review of “Mental Retardation and
Developmental Disabilities” on topics such as microcephaly, hydrocephaly, hy-
droaencephaly, megalencephaly and anomalies of the corpus collosum, it has been extended to include other con-
genital abnormalities of the central nervous system malformations with an
account of the most important demato-
glyphic findings and chromosomal syn-
dromes.

With the increasing use of CT scanning in
the diagnosis of mental retardation and the
eye detection and prevention of in-
born errors of metabolism and other
environmental causes, it seems likely that
we shall continue to see a change in the
differential pattern of morbidity in severe
mental retardation with a resurgence of
interest in congenital malformations of
the central nervous system of a non-lethal
type which will present an increasing
challenge both diagnostically and from
the point of view of prevention. For this
reason this volume is assured of a place as
a standard reference for paediatric
neurologists and other clinicians and
teachers working in the field of mental
retardation.

It is difficult to evaluate the coverage
of such a work until it has been well used
in practice, but the extensive and up to
date bibliography augurs well. Perhaps
the most obvious criticism of such an
expensively produced volume is the poor
quality of some of the illustrations, but
hopefully as its reputation becomes
established this will be rectified in future
ditions.

JOHN CORBETT

Psychopharmacology of Sleep. Edited by
David Wheatley. (Pp 256; $39.44.) New

Somnpharmacology! The title is a little
misleading. The book is really a symposium
proceedings from the British Association of
Psychopharmacology meeting in Exeter
in 1980. The contents are divided into
two equal parts, the first concerned with
the nature of sleep, and the second with
the effects of drugs on sleep. The book
is not a comprehensive manual of the
psychopharmacology of hypnotic and central
stimulant drugs nor a practical prescribing
guide but a selection of well-edited essays on
topics as diverse as sleep peptides, air
travel, benzodiazepine receptors, and new
hypnotics. It begins with a marvellous
account of sleep in animals by Bruce
Durie. Of the snakes, EEG records are
available only for the African python,
whilst only the small camens of the
crocodilians have been investigated,
perhaps not surprising facts! Durie
points out that much of the animal data is
fragile, as with the Brazilian tapir’s sleep
which was characterised by observing two
animals for one day with twitching taken
as evidence for paradoxical sleep. The
search for sleep-inducing substances has
taken three approaches, the investigation
of herbs and plants, the study of con-
nventional neurotransmitters, and the
search for endogenous hypnotoxins, pep-
tides, or sleep factors. Koella and Druker-
Colin discuss the last of these topics
although it is sometimes difficult to evalu-
ate all the evidence such as the injection
by Pavel et al of 10⁻⁴ pg of either syn-
thetic or partially purified pineal vaso-
tocin into the third ventricle of cats who
then curl up in the corner of the cage and
fall asleep. It is evident that the existence
of a specific peptide that causes sleep
has yet to be conclusively shown. Alain
Reinberg discusses chronopharmacology;
thus purgatives and enemas are most
effective given in the morning, whereas
narcotic drugs are usually best at night.
The second section of the book is a little
more pedestrian although of greater
clinical interest with stress on the value of
the new short acting benzodiazepines and
a discussion by Scott of daytime drowsi-
ness, concentrating on EEG findings
rather than practical therapy of narco-
lepsy, hypersonnolence and sleep apnoea.
The book ends with the question “do we
need hypnotics?” The night worker who
lives in Concorde’s flight path answers
“Yes”. A curate’s egg book, not essential
but fun.

JD PARKES

Electrical Stimulation Research Techni-
ques. Edited by Michael M Patterson and
Raymond P Kesner. (Pp 370; £25.80;
$39.00.) London: Academic Press Inc,
1981.

The articles collected together in this
volume present refreshingly straightforward
and clear summaries of various electrical
stimulation techniques from microstimula-
tion of the cerebral cortex to grid shock
stimulation of the whole animal. Only two
chapters (one of them co-authored by one
of the editors) stray into a literature review
of experimental results. The other authors
limit themselves to detailed explanations
and descriptions of the techniques
involved, with much useful discussion of
the limitations of each method. The advice
in most instances is the result of many years
of experience in the field and one finishes
the book with the feeling of having
attended eleven good undergraduate lec-
tures on nerve stimulation. As a result, this
volume should be of interest to anyone
about to begin research in this field, and
will be refreshing to those who have
become so familiar with the techniques
they use that they overlook some of their
limitations.

The book can be divided into four main
sections. It begins with two chapters on the
theoretical aspects of extracellular and
intracellular stimulation, presented at a
level that will be intelligible to anyone
unfamiliar with the subject. The next three
Psychopharmacology of Sleep

JD Parkes

*J Neurol Neurosurg Psychiatry* 1982 45: 571
doi: 10.1136/jnnp.45.6.571-a

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