

the persistent long-term effects of selective monoamine oxidase inhibitors, and interesting studies on the possibility of producing a reversible MAO inhibitor with high affinity for the type A enzyme. A series of papers follows dealing with the effectiveness of established monoamine oxidase inhibitors in the treatment of depression where, in general, the drugs were superior to placebo and as effective as tricyclic antidepressants, although questions of efficacy in some forms of depression remain unanswered. In contrast Lader and Savage found in a large group of patients that tricyclic antidepressants were consistently superior to monoamine oxidase inhibitor therapy or to combined tricyclic-monoamine oxidase inhibitor treatment. However, Tyrer and colleagues emphasise the need for adequate dosage taking into account pharmacokinetic factors as a critical factor in achieving clinical effect. The later chapters deal with the emergence of selective monoamine oxidase inhibitors. The chapters by Mendis and colleagues and by Mendlewicz and Youdim suggest that deprenyl itself, at least, is not useful in the treatment of depression although it may have a place in combination with L-5-hydroxytryptophan. In contrast, Murphy and colleagues working with the selective monoamine oxidase A inhibitor, chlor-gyline, and B inhibitor pargyline, find antidepressant efficacy clearly associated with type A enzyme. The book is concluded by a contribution from Merton Sandler who rightly states that selective inhibitors, at least, do not yet have an established place in antidepressant therapy, although compounds such as deprenyl may be of value in the treatment of Parkinson's disease. This is a wide-ranging book containing much useful information and is recommended to those working in this area.

PG JENNER

Pain: A Spike-Interval Coded Message in the Brain. By Raimond Emmers. (Pp 144; \$34.00.) New York: Raven Press, 1981.

This is a very idiosyncratic book. It contains the equivalent of three papers in Brain Research. The author somehow persuaded the publishers to produce this book and thereby to bypass the tedium of argument with referees. I sympathise with him but it has had the effect of insulating him from the normal criticism and I suspect from the normal readership. The scientific results are straightforward. In anaesthetised rats, there are cells in the

posterior part of the VPL nucleus in the thalamus which fire with a characteristic repetitive burst if an intense shock is given to the sciatic nerve. The repetitive burst is generated by interaction with the nuclei CM-Pf. Lastly he shows that if anaesthesia is increased or narcotics are given or the periaqueductal grey is stimulated or dorsal columns are stimulated, the characteristic repetitive response of the cells declines. This is good standard stuff already mainly published by the author who reasonably points out that the repetitive discharge of these cells increases and decreases under conditions where one might expect pain to increase or decrease. Unfortunately the book then turns to a series of excited shouts of "Eureka, I have discovered the code for pain". With only 46 references, the work of others in the past 20 years is largely ignored. The simplest of checks to challenge his own conviction even for an anaesthetised rat are not carried out. For example, all but some experimental pain is produced by asynchronous afferent barrages and yet it seems from his own data that this would not produce the "spike interval coded message in the brain" which is part of his title. Almost everyone has abandoned the classical view that pain is to be explained by the presence or absence of activity in modality specific cells. In that sense, Dr Emmers joins the majority but for the majority to join Dr Emmers in his intuitive conviction that he knows the code will require much more evidence which I am sure he is investigating.

PD WALL

The Effects of Taurine on Excitable Tissues. Edited by SW Schaffer, Steven I Baskin and James J Kocsis. (Pp 446; £35.50.) Lancaster: MTP Press Ltd, 1981.

This volume presents the proceedings of the 21st AN Richards Symposium held in Valley Forge Pennsylvania in April 1979. It contains 29 research reports, mostly of a rather fragmentary nature, grouped under four headings ("Metabolism and Function of Taurine Analogues", "Actions of Taurine—in the Central Nervous System",—"in the Cardiovascular System", "Clinical Implications of Taurine"). A brief edited Discussion of each section is included.

The section on the Central Nervous System includes one contribution on platelets, one on the pineal gland and three on the retina. Among the latter

the review by Mary Voaden and colleagues is informative and a pleasure to read.

The overall quality of the contributions to this volume is regrettably low. This is only partly a reflection of the state of the art in taurine research. The editors may not have been able to exercise the selection and control they would have wished. However, they could have noticed that the list of references at the end of Chapter 4 does not correspond with those quoted in the text.

What taurine does in excitable membranes and why the retina degenerates in taurine deficient cats remain intriguing mysteries. Will research on taurine provide the key to spino-cerebellar degenerative disorders or to epilepsy? The answers to these problems are certainly not evident in this volume. Some of the footnotes might provide vital clues to the research worker. However, readers seeking a general guide to the uncertain territory of taurine and its role in cerebral function in health and disease are likely to prefer the 1978 volume edited by Barbeau and Huxtable.

BRIAN MELDRUM

Modern Practical Neurology: An Introduction to Diagnosis and Management of Common Neurologic Disorders—2nd ed. By Peritz Scheinberg. (Pp 360; \$39.44.) New York: Raven Press, 1981.

This is one more short textbook to join the hosts of others that fill the libraries. Most of these are very adequate, all of them reflect the author's particular interests, foibles and biases; the reviewer suspects that the principal aim in most of them is to satisfy the author's ego rather than to instruct. This generalisation is really to explain why it is absolutely necessary to demand what it is that a fresh textbook offers that separates it from the rest and justifies the labour that has gone into its compilation. Dr Scheinberg's claim is that it is disease orientated and that a special effort has been made to explain symptoms and signs in the context of the mechanism of their causation. While it is true that this is what he has done in many of the chapters the reviewer finds it difficult to accept that this is the only textbook of neurology that sets out to do this, and while many have done it less effectively with a greater number of errors, there are others that do it as well, so that it is not a text that one reads and feels is a welcome addition to an already

well-stocked library. However, as the only guide to neurology in the hands of a junior resident or a medical student it would hold its own with many of the others. As the author points out in his preface, his opinions may not be shared by all other authorities, and this is reasonable. However, like all single author texts, there are occasions when his views may not be accepted by any other authorities. The reviewer, for instance, would have preferred to have had greater emphasis on the frequency with which vertigo may occur as a symptom of carotid artery disease, and a mention at least of the value of 24 hour recording of the ECG in the elucidation of transient ischaemic attacks. One would have liked greater emphasis on the benign nature of much multiple sclerosis; all areas of common neurological practice. Finally the statement that classical myxoedema is easy to recognise is perhaps true, but should be accompanied by the observation that it is rarely classical and almost always missed. Apart from this there is really little that one could quarrel about in what is, as the author states, clearly a construct of personal experience, literature search and much opinion-seeking from others.

RE KELLY

Sleep Disorders, Insomnia and Narcolepsy. By Henry Kellerman. (Pp 250; \$27.20.) New York: Raven Press, 1981.

The total value of medical book sales in 1979 in the USA was over \$110,000,000 (*New Engl J Med*, 1981 July 9, p 113). A large part of these sales was due to popular medical publications and in the last decade many patients have become as knowledgeable as their physicians about their ailments. The present book is in the borderland between psychiatry, medicine and the patient, for example—"How to understand your cancer" or "Sex and old age". Does the reader get his money's worth? Almost certainly the book is worthless. Lacking any firm diagnostic criteria or any kind of critical approach the author attempts to relate sleep problems to interpersonal phenomena. This policy leads him to the conclusion that secondary dependant persons are symbiotic and not well enough differentiated. Such people may be potential problem sleepers and do not know where their parents begin and they end. In a second section the distinction between Narcolepsy, Hypnosis and Schizophrenia is

considered. Freudian views are discussed at length; thus for example we learn that sleep paralysis may accomplish the avoidance of masturbation. The final section discusses the importance of psychotherapy in the treatment of insomnia and is of more value but this book will not appeal to physicians and should not appeal to their patients.

JD PARKES

Fundamentals to a Pharmacology of the Mind. By Corneliu E Giurgea. (Pp 415; \$37.75.) Illinois: Charles C Thomas, 1981.

To most Western psychiatrists and neurologists Pavlov is known for his salivating dogs and the introduction into psychology of such terms as conditioned reflex. What, however, is not often appreciated is that studies of the physiological basis of mental activity by the Russian scientists in particular has continued for over 100 years. Based on the reflexology of Sechenov, and receiving experimental confirmation with the work of Pavlov, it has been continued by such authors as the Bechterevas and Kupalov, and taken to the United States most prominently by Horsley Gantt. It is to the latter that the book is dedicated, Professor Giurgea having produced, in his own words, a "hybrid Janus-like volume which is neither a textbook nor a real essay but something that touches both of them". In it he sets out to lay down the theoretical and experimental foundations of psychopharmacology with particular reference to our knowledge of the physiological basis of the mind based in particular on the theories of those mentioned above, but integrating these ideas with the author's own profound knowledge of the neurophysiological and neurochemical ideas that have developed in the West. He emphasises the Sherringtonian concept of "integrative action" of the nervous system, and attempts to unite the organic with the so-called functional. In particular he notes how the neuroses in humans have been poorly investigated, and indeed are looked upon pejoratively by many doctors. He however compares human neuroses to the experimental neuroses, as developed from the work of Pavlov, and introduces us to such words as "cortico-visceral" as a replacement for the word "psychosomatic". Analysis of such experimental phenomena as supraliminal inhibition, in which behavioural inhibition is seen to take place when too strong a stimulus

is applied, short-acting conditioned stimuli and shortened conditioned reflexes, in which only a change in the functional state of the brain as opposed to a specific external reaction takes place following a stimulus, and autokinesis or "incubation during which an experimental neurosis does not manifest itself until some time after the experimental challenge", are all seen to have clinical counterparts.

The extension of these ideas, that the mental state, and particularly disturbances of it, have a physiological foundation, leads to the second main thesis of the book, namely that such processes can be influenced by psychotropic drugs. It is here that I think it deserves some criticism for an over-extended presentation of data on one drug, namely piracetam, consideration of which takes up some 80 pages. While it may turn out to be the best thing since sliced bread, it could have been considered, in the overall context of this book, in a far shorter space and the book would have been all the more readable for such an exclusion.

At a time when the psychiatric establishment in this country is trying to cut itself off from all contact with its Russian counterparts, this book is a notable reminder of the great contributions to psychology that have stemmed from many authors within the Eastern bloc, which have relevance for neuropsychiatrists, particularly those interested in understanding and developing a physiologically-based approach to the mind and mental disorders. I would recommend the book to anyone who has an interest in such subjects.

MICHAEL TRIMBLE

Antidepressants: Neurochemical, Behavioral and Clinical Perspectives. Edited by SJ Enna, Jeffrey B Malick and Elliott Richelson. (Pp 272; \$43.52.) New York: Raven Press, 1981.

Many new anti-depressant drugs have been introduced into clinical use since the advent of imipramine therapy in the mid 1950s. Accompanying the wide variety of compounds introduced has been a great deal of research into the underlying cause of the illness and the mechanism of action of the drug used to treat depression. Much of this has been spurred on by the lucrative markets for such compounds. This volume contains a relatively up-to-date summary of our present knowledge of the mechanism of action of anti-depressant drugs. In



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RE Kelly

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