

The authors are right to criticise the use of psychosurgery on children, on prisoners and on involuntary patients; they can also justifiably complain of its use for such nebulous behavioural disorders as hyperactivity and excessive aggression. Psychosurgery has always been open to attack for lack of clear evidence of efficacy and for the absence of controlled studies; these are the authors' strongest grounds for criticism. As non-medical scientists they can hardly perhaps be expected to sympathise with the clinician's dilemmas and his preference for using patients over time as their own controls. The book's reiterated demand for rigour and scientific purity becomes in the end rather wearisome.

Much of the book's content dates from the fifties and sixties. It would have helped the reader to be told succinctly what operations are now done in which countries for what conditions and for what illnesses. Of the many techniques, which are the survivors?

The style and language are refreshingly simple, although "to lesion" is unwelcome and "operatee", which occurs on scores of pages (why not patient?) is a horror.

ALAN NORTON

Neuropsychology and Neurolinguistics. Selected papers. By Egon Weigl. (Pp 360; DM 105.) The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1981.

Egon Weigl's investigations in the field of neuropsychology were mostly conducted during his retirement. He continued to publish original work up until his death in 1979: *Neuropsychology and Neurolinguistics* was in preparation at that time. It is prefaced with introductions from Luria and Bierwisch, and a brief autobiography by the author. The book contains a collection of Weigl's papers many of which appear for the first time in translation, and others which have been taken from relatively inaccessible sources.

Neuropsychology and Neurolinguistics is mostly concerned with investigations into language and literacy dysfunction, the principal exception being his excellent discussion of classification and sorting tasks originally published in 1927. Weigl's approach to language dysfunction is more concerned with an analysis of the inter-relationships and dissociations between components of the "speech functional system" rather than with localisation. He was also actively involved with attempts to remediate deficits in access to particular

functional components by the use of "deblocking" techniques.

Weigl's work has often anticipated more recent "western" theoretical analyses of neuropsychological dysfunction, and many of his ideas are very stimulating. However, *Neuropsychology and Neurolinguistics* is not without its flaws. The quality and intelligibility of the translation is sometimes poor, and the style of reporting empirical investigations is frequently unnecessarily complex. Nevertheless, I would recommend this book to anyone with an active research involvement in neuropsychology as a useful primary source of papers from an insightful and occasionally brilliant clinical investigator.

R MCCARTHY

Acetylsalicylic acid: new uses for an old drug. Edited by HJM Barrett, J Hirsh, J Fraser Mustard. Raven Press, New York. (US \$53.32.)

With modern printing techniques it should no longer be necessary for a review to have to begin by complaining that a report of a symposium is three years out of date. The nature of the material presented at such meetings is such that it is only of real value to those present, forming as it does the basis for useful informal discussion, and often triggering a series of new experiments when the delegates get back to the laboratory. Three years further on there can only be a few contributions of lasting value.

This book concerns a conference held in March 1980 when there was great interest in the role of aspirin as an antithrombotic drug. Many clinicians needed to be informed about the rationale for its use, and detailed discussions of the early trials were of interest. I suspect most now know the story of "goody" prostacyclin and "baddy" thromboxane, and the theoretical arguments that a paediatric tablet every third day might be the "right" dose of aspirin. Some of the contributions remain relevant to live issues; for example Kelton's piece on the sex difference in the effect of aspirin on platelet behaviour that can be seen in the results of many trials and in some animal experiments.

For people working in this field there are many good reviews of background research but they will find articles on pyrexia, inflammation and the ductus arteriosus which seem out of place when the book basically concerns the role of aspirin and prostaglandins on thrombosis and

haemostasis. Perhaps the most useful parts of the book now are the reviews of side effects. If the current second phase of massive clinical trials confirms a stroke-preventing role for aspirin, the side effect/dose equation will become of crucial importance to widespread prescribing habits.

MJG HARRISON

Notices

The Volvo awards for low back pain research

The Volvo Company of Goteborg, Sweden, this year has sponsored three prizes of \$5000.00 each. Awards will be made competitively on the basis of scientific merit in the following three areas:

(1) Clinical studies, (2) Bioengineering studies, (3) Studies in other basic science areas.

Details of the conditions of the competition from:

Prof Alf L Nachemson, Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, Sahlgren Hospital, S-413 45 Goteborg, Sweden.

The Sixth International Symposium on Brain Edema will be held in Tokyo, Japan, 8-10 November, 1984. Further information may be obtained from the Secretariat, Department of Neurosurgery, Tokyo Medical and Dental School of Medicine, 1-5-45, Yushima, Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo, 103 Japan.

CORRECTION

The book review by Alan Richardson of *Neurol Neurosurg Psychiatry* 1983;46:592 referred to **Early Management of Acute Spinal Cord Injury**, edited by Charles H Tator. New York. Raven Press (Pp 444; \$41.00) and not to the title which appeared above the review.