Book reviews


The elegant pathology carried out in many neurological diseases has often provided a clear indication of those parts of the nervous system on which further investigation should centre. Subsequent biochemical investigation in these areas has identified changes in neurotransmitter systems which have greatly assisted in understanding disorders such as Parkinson’s disease and Huntington’s chorea. But recent advances have identified a vast array of further potential neurotransmitter substances, namely the neuropeptides, and the time has come to assess their role in the aetiology, progression and drug treatment of neurological disease.

Peptides and Neurological Disease represents a brave attempt to answer these problems. Although resulting from a symposium held in 1983 the editors have thoughtfully added other contributions to produce a balanced approach to the state of the art. The major difficulty is that at this stage the role of neuropeptides in neurological disease is far from clear. For this reason, the book considers the techniques for assessing peptide systems and the distribution of peptide substances in basal ganglia, cerebral cortex and spinal cord. These chapters in turn are the prelude to excellent descriptions of the alterations in peptide substances which occur in Parkinson’s disease, Huntington’s chorea, Alzheimer’s type dementia and schizophrenia. The section on spinal cord sensibly leads to a consideration of the role of neuropeptides in pain. In a manner typical of the logical way in which this book has been put together the final sections consider how peptide substances may provide drugs of the future and their clinical relevance to neurological disease. Clearly, it is still early days in peptide research and at present there is no effective treatment of neurological or psychiatric disease based on peptide derivatives. However, if the enthusiasm for investigations in this area, which has brought together the contributors to this volume, continues unabated, then it must only be a question of time before the peptides make a significant contribution to this field.

A volume to be recommended to the basic scientist and interested clinicians. Also, a must for library collections. The only drawback will be the high cost of the book which will deter many from obtaining this valuable work.

P Jenner


This is a nicely produced little monograph derived from a symposium held at one of the American Psychiatric Association’s meetings. It is one of a series entitled “Progress in Psychiatry” and was clearly intended to capture the essence of some important symposias, so that people who could not attend the meeting would nevertheless have the thoughts and writings of the presenters.

The central theme of this one is very topical, and we are presented with five brief reviews of the relationship of schizophrenia to cerebral localisation. As may be expected, the central themes revolve around frontal and temporolimbic disease, and in the brief space allotted to the authors, the reviews can hardly be called comprehensive. It is pleasing to see a contribution from this side of the Atlantic, with the Reveleys providing a chapter on genetics, and it is a little disappointing not to have some final chapter, preferably from the symposium organisers, summarising what they feel has come from their efforts, and perhaps digesting the important avenues for further research.

The issue of cerebral localisation in schizophrenia is one which requires considerable thought. For those interested, this little book will provide an up to date literature review, and can be recommended. Others who will benefit include students who feel that at long last they should try to get to grips with biological psychiatry and its relationship to schizophrenia, and who need an introductory text.

M Trimble


The frontal lobes present behavioural neuroscientists with a mystery. In phylogenetic terms, the development of prefrontal cortex is the most obvious anatomical difference between man and other species. In man the frontal lobes account for 24–33% of the total cortical surface area, yet even extensive damage may produce relatively lit-
Peptides and Neurological Disease

P Jenner

*J Neurol Neurosurg Psychiatry* 1987 50: 954
doi: 10.1136/jnnp.50.7.954

Updated information and services can be found at:
http://jnnp.bmj.com/content/50/7/954.1.citation

**Email alerting service**

Receive free email alerts when new articles cite this article. Sign up in the box at the top right corner of the online article.

**Notes**

To request permissions go to:
http://group.bmj.com/group/rights-licensing/permissions

To order reprints go to:
http://journals.bmj.com/cgi/reprintform

To subscribe to BMJ go to:
http://group.bmj.com/subscribe/