

a practical guide to the investigation of patients. The stated aim of the series is to describe the development, methods and interpretation of clinical tests in various specialities, together with an evaluation of their accuracy, safety and clinical usefulness.

The opening chapter of *Diagnostic Tests in Neurology* covers radiology, neurophysiology, lumbar puncture and PET scanning in a concise twenty pages where the basic techniques and indications are critically reviewed. Readers are not spared the cost effectiveness of some of the more widely used tests, in particular the skull radiograph. Chapter 2 launches into non-specific symptoms like headache, dizziness and syncope and gives a clearly argued recommendation on their investigation indicating that in many instances all that is required is a good history and clinical examination. This section alone is to be highly commended to general practitioners or anyone else considering referring a dizzy or headache patient to a neurologist. The author then successively discusses the value of various tests in the different areas of clinical practice including AIDS and neurological emergencies, each chapter being followed by a vast list of carefully chosen references.

All the old chestnuts are covered—when should you do an EEG? when shouldn't you do a lumbar puncture? and what do you achieve by radiography of the cervical spine? The flow diagrams for assessment of various problems are particularly good and could be developed further to include cerebellar disorders, spinal cord syndromes and neuropathy—this would be for future editions.

There must always be a few minor niggles in a book at the lower end of the price market and the greatest of these is that the reproduction of radiological material is largely poor although it could have been helped by the judicious use of arrows—I am still puzzling over the PET scans and the Duplex scan of the internal carotid artery on page 59 is meaningless to anyone unversed in that particular art-form. Some of the discussion on radiology is arguably already outdated, such as myodil and metrizamide are now ancient history in neuroradiological departments in the UK (or should be!). The description of the principles of MRI scanning is so pithy that it borders incomprehensibility and a diagram may have helped. These however are minor criticisms and overall I can only admire the author's ability to provide a refreshing and unbiased account of the state of the art in neurological investigations. To condense this into three hundred and twenty two pages which include sixty six pages of

references is a remarkable achievement. Everyone involved in clinical neurological practice should have a copy of this book and it will probably end up too on the shelves of most audit conscious Unit Managers. In summary it is a little masterpiece.

D JEFFERSON

Receptors and Ligands in Psychiatry. *Inter-cellular and Intracellular Communication series Vol 3.* Edited by A K Sen, Tyrone Lee. (Pp 578; £75.00.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

The search for an organic cause for psychiatric disorders has so far yielded little. Many hypotheses of such diseases have been suggested but none proven. Few concepts have stood the test of time. The ability of specific drug classes to control the symptoms of psychiatric illness has led to theories which may have absolutely nothing to do with the underlying fault. More recently, the use of receptor binding techniques also has suggested alterations in neuronal receptor function which may be related to the disease process. However, these probably tell us more about the way in which neurotransmitter receptors adapt to disorganised neuronal activity, be it caused directly or indirectly by the disease or its drug treatment.

The volume title leads the reader to expect contributions centred on neurotransmitter receptors and the use of the ligands which identify them in a variety of psychiatric disorders. This is not the case; instead the reader is faced with 25 diverse views on the cause, treatment and detection of schizophrenia, depression and anxiety. Apart from a few chapters at the end of the volume dealing with basic problems of receptor research (for example specificity of ligands, isolation and purification of neurotransmitter receptors) most chapters form a strange mixture of highly personalised views on the relationship of a variety of neurotransmitter systems to mental illness. Many of the chapters are individually concise and well-balanced reviews of specific areas. For example, there are comprehensive introductions to experimental and clinical studies in new psychopharmacological research areas such as the antipsychotic potential of dopamine autoreceptor agonists and antagonists or the relation of acetylcholine and 5-HT to schizophrenia. Others, however, are simple collections of data. The major problem is that overall, the chapters make strange bedfellows and do not deal with the issues the book title suggests.

The specialist research worker may find this volume of limited value but it does give an overview of the neurochemical and psychopharmacological basis of current research in biological psychiatry together with an indication of its lack of cohesiveness at this time.

P JENNER

Carotid Artery Plaques: Pathogenesis, Development, Evaluation, Treatment. Edited by M Hennerici, G Sitzer, H-D Weger. (Pp 282; £36.41.) Basel: Karger, 1988.

This book consists of the papers presented at a workshop in West Germany in January 1987, and it suffers from many of the faults such books are prone to. It is two years out of date by the time it is printed. In the hurry to get into print, the editorial supervision of each contribution has been rather rushed and there are many mistakes, some of which are quite serious (two pages transposed, several figures misnumbered), some of which are irritating (different citation styles in different chapters) and some merely detract from the overall impression of the book (very varied contributions—some very detailed and referenced, others very sketchy). My two major criticisms are that much of this material has been published elsewhere in peer-reviewed journals and that several of the chapters are quite badly out of date. Nonetheless, the book does have some merits. The contributors are predominantly based in institutions on this side of the Atlantic, so there is a refreshingly European bias in the studies reviewed and referenced (many of which were not published in English). The scope of the book is very broad, and covers a diversity of topics (from vortex flow patterns in the internal carotid artery to sequencing the genes related to atherosclerosis) which the average neurologist reader would not generally encounter.

I got the impression that the workshop that yielded this book was probably very stimulating, but that it would have been better either to leave it unpublished or expend a great deal of effort in improving the presentation and editorial consistency. I personally found that many of the chapters were interesting but rather sketchy on methodological detail or too uncritical to be really convincing. In summary, I wish I had gone to the workshop and I recommend your Departmental library buys the book if you have a research interest in cerebrovascular disease.

PETER SANDERCOCK



***Receptors and Ligands in
Psychiatry. Intercellular and
Intracellular Communication
series Vol 3***

P Jenner

J Neurol Neurosurg Psychiatry 1989 52: 691
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