Book reviews

NEUROSURGICAL TECHNIQUES By Alfonso Asenjo. Revised and enlarged English Edition. (Pp. xvii + 339; 301 figs; illustrated. \$19.75.) Springfield, Ill.: Charles C. Thomas. 1963.

So many textbooks in these days are written in such a stilted style and with so much obscurity of language that it is a positive relief to read this book which is clear and simple. Professor Asenjo has developed neurosurgery on the west coast of South America and, in fact, his pupils have spread widely throughout the world. Only a few months ago when visiting Afghanistan I discovered two budding neurosurgeons about to set off to Santiago, Chile. This book sets out in a direct and personal way the practice of operative surgery at his Institute. The descriptions of operative techniques relate strictly to his practice and no attempt is made in general to give alternative methods. This is all to the good and on the few occasions when reference is made to techniques not commonly used in his clinic these appear very dull beside the forthright descriptions of operations in common use there.

In writing such a book it must be extremely difficult to separate operative technique from the indications for such technique and the clinical complications. In most cases he has not solved this difficulty and the scraps of clinical information scattered throughout the text are sometimes too short to be useful and seldom give one a clear idea of the indications for certain operations.

There is considerable unevenness in emphasis; for example, several pages are devoted to various injections of peripheral trigeminal branches, a procedure largely abandoned in Europe, whilst the surgery of brain abscesses is dismissed in a few lines. In general, however, the field is well covered and a special point is made of the basic methods of neurosurgery, techniques for dealing with scalp, skull, meninges, and brain.

It must be very largely a tribute to Harvey Cushing that the descriptions given here of most operative procedures accord so closely with those in general use throughout the world and I could find only very minor points of disagreement, for instance burr holes for ventriculography only 3 cm. above theinion are too low and likely to damage the visual pathways, and no mention is made of rib or iliac crest autografts for skull repair. There are certain glaring errors; few of us will have seen an aneurysm, 10 cm. diameter, which was accessible and easily dissected, and the advice when operating on aneurysms that should bleeding become uncontrollable operation should be deferred to a later date might lead to disaster. These errors are few, however, unlikely to mislead and will, no doubt, be corrected in later editions.

The failures in this book are those subjects where no clear line of operative treatment can be laid down but must depend on appearances and investigations carried out at the time of operation. This applies particularly to surgery for epilepsy and to stereotactic surgery. In neither case are the descriptions clear enough or full enough to

guide the novice. In stereotactic surgery he might have been wiser to give a really full and clear description of his own apparatus rather than a scrappy survey of several machines none of which would be very helpful in practice.

Head trauma, operations for neuralgia, and on the spine are particularly well done and contain many of those practical tips, learnt by long experience and which so seldom appear in books on operative surgery.

Despite minor criticisms this book is a splendid one and one that has been much needed in the past. Every embryo neurosurgeon should have a copy and all of us will learn something from it. The standard of English is so good that one hopes the translator will have a special mention on the title page in future editions.

BRODIE HUGHES

BIOPOTENTIALS OF CEREBRAL HEMISPHERES IN BRAIN TUMOURS By N. P. Bekhtereva. Translated from Russian by Basil Haigh. (The International Behavioral Sciences Series.) (Pp. viii + 183; illustrated. \$12.50.) New York: Consultants Bureau. 1962.

This is an English translation of a Russian monograph published in 1960 and describes the author's extensive experience with the E.E.G. investigation of supratentorial tumours at the A. L. Polenov Leningrad Neurosurgical Research Institute. It deals with routine and special diagnostic E.E.G. procedures, including corticography and encephaloscopy, and it refers especially to the use of stimulation techniques with light and sound. The findings and associated general physiological problems and theories are discussed in relation to both the western and Russian literature. For the clinical neurophysiologist this book provides a valuable review of Russian E.E.G. work as well as detailed information about the diagnosis of tumours and the fundamental physiological problems involved, *e.g.*, pacemaker and synchronizing mechanisms. Unfortunately in the translation the wording is at times unusual but the many illustrations are clear. This is a worthwhile contribution to English E.E.G. literature.

E. W. POOLE

SELECTIVE VULNERABILITY OF THE BRAIN IN HYPOXAEMIA A symposium organized by the Council for International Organizations of Medical Sciences. (Pp. xii + 395; illustrated. 70s.) Oxford: Blackwell Scientific Publications. 1963.

Hypoxaemia of the brain is increasingly important, for with improved methods of resuscitation increasing numbers of patients are kept alive after hypoxaemia, due either to reduced arterial PO_2 or to interruption of the blood supply to the brain. At the symposium on which this book is based experts in various fields discussed factors involved in such brain injuries, both in experimental animals and in man. Among other topics they discuss the effect of hypoxia on cerebral blood flow, on