Book reviews

A Clinician's View of Neuromuscular Diseases By Michael H. Brooke. (Pp. 225; illustrated; \$18.95.) Williams and Wilkins: Baltimore. 1977.

In this well-written and readable book Dr Brooke has achieved a comprehensive clinical review of the whole spectrum of neuromuscular disorders. The tone and pace of the book are well set by the epithet to the first chapter on symptoms and signs—"Please listen to the patient, he's trying to tell you what disease he has," and by the opening sentence—"It often seems that the urgency with which physicians rush their patients off for laboratory studies has its historical equal only in the migration of lemmings. . . ." Individual chapters are devoted to systematic descriptions of disorders of the motor neurone, peripheral neuropathies, diseases of the neuromuscular junction, muscular dystrophies, myotonia, inflammatory myopathies, metabolic muscle diseases, abnormal muscle activity, and ending with "congenital (more or less)" muscle diseases.

The descriptions are concise but comprehensive and interspersed with clinical photographs and an occasional biopsy photomicrograph. The bibliography is intentionally selective and often recent rather than historical or original. This is a highly individual work which should find appeal with a wide audience of clinicians at all levels.

VICTOR DUBOWITZ

Treatment of Neuromuscular Diseases Advances in Neurology Volume 17 Edited by R. C. Griggs and R. T. Moxley. (Pp. 384; illustrated; \$31.20.) Raven Press: New York. 1977.

Not surprisingly, a book with this title has to be padded out with material which is not strictly "treatment." Indeed more than half of the chapters are on pathology, "research trends," metabolic, genetic, and EMG studies. Nevertheless, it is gratifying that there should be so much useful therapeutic information to report on a group of diseases still widely believed outside the cognoscenti to be untreatable. The introductory chapter by one of the editors is a succinct account of the scope of treatment. The

review of treatment for dermatomyositis and polymyositis is well balanced and justifiably reserved on the relative merits of immunosuppressive drugs and steroids. Professor Rowland and his colleagues consider that dermatomyositis and polymyositis should be regarded separately in clinical trials as their experience indicates significant differences. They advise initial use of prednisone but when "steroid resistance" occurs, immunosuppressive treatment is justified when the disease is incapacitating or life-threatening. The treatment of myasthenia gravis is largely confined to the use of steroids, with some conventional remarks on thymectomy. Plasmapheresis is not mentioned. There is an interesting chapter on disorders of glycogen and lipid metabolism with some preliminary observations on treatment, and the account of myotonic disorders and periodic paralyses is a useful summary.

The chapter on neuropathies properly concentrates on "treatable" types and is suitably reserved with regard to the role of corticosteroids. The chapter on amyotrophic lateral sclerosis is well balanced and gives a good account of ameliorative measures which are commonly neglected. There are rewarding sections on orthopaedic measures and on cardiorespiratory problems. Despite some flat spots (including an impossible diagram of the stretch reflex) the book is a worthwhile compendium.

J. A. SIMPSON

Dementia Second edition Edited by Charles E. Wells. (Pp. 284; illustrated; \$22.00.) F. A. Davis Company: Philadelphia. 1977.

The description of normal pressure hydrocephalus by R. D. Adams and S. Hakim in 1965 was a turning point in the attitude to dementia. That a biochemical disorder such as myxoedema or deficiency of vitamin B12 was reversible was reasonable, but that shunting of CSF from ventricles to theca in the absence of an abnormal pressure gradient could lead to rapid restoration of mental function seemed almost incredible. Even if the first flush of enthusiasm has subsided, the striking improvement in some patients means that careful assessment must be offered to every demented

patient. A non-invasive technique, computerised axial tomography, must be available more widely, even if isotope cisternography and infusion manometry are still required to confirm the diagnosis.

The first edition of this well-known monograph, only seven years ago, played a major role in alerting neurologists and psychiatrists to the changing situation for the demented patient. This second edition enlarges and updates topics previously covered but has some new chapters and new contributors. The emphasis is changing—vascular disease of the brain is being downgraded and viral infection considered more seriously with kuru and Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease as influential models, but biochemistry is marking time and immunology is not even indexed. Surely there will be changes in the third edition. The possible relationship of aluminium to Alzheimer disease; neurotransmitter disorders which can be changed pharmacologically; drugs which influence memory, storage and recall; already tentative contributions are reaching the journals. Meanwhile this splendid book is a valuable guide in difficult territory which all must enter, because this is the neurology of the next decade.

J. A. SIMPSON

Interactions Between Putative Neurotransmitters in the Brain Edited by S. Garattini, J. F. Pujol, and R. Samanin. (Pp. 415; illustrated; \$33.00.) Raven Press: New York. 1978.

This book is a collection of papers presented at a Symposium at the Mario Negri Institute in Milan. In such publications the editors ask speakers to cover agreed topics but have little influence on the content. The resultant quality of such compilations is frequently very heterogeneous and this book is no exception.

The general subject covered here is complex and important: now that many neuronal pathways have been mapped and their neurotransmitters tentatively identified, some understanding of their interactions is vital to the neuroscientist. This is particularly so in view of the cascade of events (behavioural and biochemical) likely to result from