Book reviews

Neurology Proceedings of the Eleventh World Congress of Neurology, Amsterdam, 1977 Edited by W. A. den Hartog Jager, G. W. Bruyn, and A. P. J. Heijstee. (Pp. 437; illustrated; Dfl155.00.) Excerpta Medica: Amsterdam and Oxford. 1978.

There is growing (age-related!) reaction against large international congresses with simultaneous sessions and expensive organisation. On the other hand, the small meeting of cognoscenti removes the specialist worker from the opportunity of serendipitous education. The World Congresses of Neurology have reacted by providing small sessions for specialist groups but also seminars by invited experts on important topics of current interest which are then published separately from the free communications. These are extremely valuable summaries for the general neurologist.

The present volume has four themes. The section on neuroimmunology contains excellent introductory accounts of immunology, and then discusses brain-specific cell markers, demyelination, chronic viral infection of the CNS, neurology of immunodeficiency states, and myasthenia gravis, all from the immunological point of view. These papers are good, containing some novel ideas and not merely reviewing familiar material. The second theme, neuromuscular disorders, sadly makes one feel that despite modern histochemistry and ultramicroscopy, we are again talking of muscle as a tissue with "a limited repertoire of pathological responses", except in myasthenia gravis where Andrew Engel's beautiful studies on receptor deficiency and immune complexes at the motor endplate in myasthenia gravis are drawn to the attention of a wider audience. The seminar on disturbances of consciousness and cognition gives opportunity to review some interesting neurophysiology and chemistry (peptides) with clinical studies on head injury and other causes of coma, with further speculation by Gazzaniga about two separate conscious entities from split-brain studies. Quite fascinating. Geographical factors in neurology, the final theme, are of local interest but have nothing in common except regional variation and the usual

speculations on soil factors, climate, diet, and infantile infection.

One cannot review so many different papers, but it will be clear that the book is enjoyable and worth buying. Even though I attended all the sessions, I found the whole book compulsive reading.

J. A. SIMPSON

EEG Informatics—A Didactic Review of Methods and Applications of EEG Data Processing Edited by A. Rémond. (Pp. 425; illustrated; Dfl. 90.00.) Elsevier Scientific Publishing Co: Amsterdam. 1977.

Informatics is a word coined by the Académie Française to replace the expression "data processing". It is defined as "the science of rational processing (in particular by adequate machines) of information considered as a prop for human knowledge and communication in the technical, economic, and social domains". *EEG Informatics* is a course of didactic lectures on EEG data processing held under the auspices of the International Federation of Societies for Electroencephalography and Clinical Neurophysiology in Paris in 1977.

The first section describes the methods currently in use in advanced EEG laboratories. The second section discusses the practical applications of these methods, and a third section gives clinical and research applications. Naturally, the fundamental problem that the scalp EEG reflects essentially the activity of the convexity cortex remains, regardless of how the recorded potential changes are manipulated. Data processing is also more prone to bias than may be appreciated. Enthusiasts should certainly read the wise lectures by D. O. Walter before becoming committed to a particular approach.

The early chapters will daunt most clinical electroencephalographers. We have been "considering taking time out to brush up on mathematics and statistics" for many years. Frankly it has not been worth it, so far as clinical application is concerned. It is, without question, necessary for EEG scientists to do so, with modern calculating

machines, but there is now a situation of communication failure between the cognoscenti and the shop floor worker. This course of lectures should have bridged the gap. Unfortunately it does not do so. Careful rereading sometimes makes clear that which was obscure, commonly due to such simple problems as the exact use of English. In old fashioned publishing it was the editor's responsibility to minimise this. The modern method of reproducing the author's typescript makes this impossible. Speed of publication can be dearly bought. Nevertheless, there is a lot of valuable material by the most prominent EEG scientists which should be studied by any one interested in the EEG at more than an elementary level.

J. A. SIMPSON

Current Techniques in Operative Neurosurgery. Edited by Henry Schmidek and William H. Sweet. (Pp. 517; illustrated; \$65.00.) Grune & Stratton: New York. 1978.

Neurosurgery cannot rest upon its laurels: in addition to the advanced nonsurgical methods of management of movement disorders, of pain, and of subarachnoid haemorrhage, other surgeons are making inroads into areas which were once the neurosurgeon's preserve. For those who might feel that the neurosurgeon's very future is threatened, this book provides a positive answer. Some of the expert contributors to its 33 chapters describe recent modifications and improvements in long established techniques: the application of precise microsurgical techniques to the surgery of tumours of the pituitary base of skull, pineal and posterior fossa and an ingenious array of different approaches to the intervertebral disc at all levels of the spine. Other chapters describe techniques introduced only in recent years: the anastomosis of extracranial arteries to cerebral cortical arteries in the management of cerebral ischaemia, intravascular surgery for aneurysms, and a variety of direct and stereotactic surgical procedures for pain. The results which have been obtained with the various procedures are usually quoted. Yet, many of the methods de-