Book reviews

Neurochemistry of Aminosugars by EG Brunngraber (pp 701; illustrated; \$29.50) Charles C. Thomas, Illinois. 1979.

The author has produced an impressively comprehensive monograph on the structure, metabolism and pathology of gangliosides, glycosaminoglycans and glycoproteins. The mode of linkage of sugar residues to protein constituents is important in our understanding of the structure and function of these complex molecules and certainly we know much more about the sugar sequences than we do about their peptide or protein parts. The author pays substantial attention to these features, which is perhaps why the title emphasises the constituent aminosugars rather than the macromolecules themselves, which seem to me to be what the book is about.

Painstaking effort has been made in searching the original literature and to coherent organisation of the data; it is pleasing to report that historical developments in the field have not been ignored. It seems that all the major contributions to the subject up to 1977 have been covered—addenda list subsequent references for each Chapter, from Chemical Abstracts up to September 1978. It is difficult to imagine a text book more up-to-date than this. In these addenda, full titles of references are given, making them of real use.

While I found the scientific content of the book admirable in coverage, depth and lucidity of style, I was not so impressed with the presentation: the poor quality of the paper and type (not quite camera-ready copy?) may have been deliberate in order to keep the price down—it is cheap by current standards—but the presentation and interest to the reader would have been greatly enhanced by more illustrations. These are truly scanty, with 9 figures, and fewer tables in over 600 pages of text. Perhaps economies can be taken too far? However, the book is well served by a 40 page index and I believe it will prove invaluable to neurologists and neuroscientists.

HS BACHELARD

Advances in Neurology, Vol. 26 Cerebral Hypoxia and its Consequences Edited by S Fahn, JN Davis, LP Rowland (pp 343 ill; \$38.35) New York: Raven Press. 1979.

This book arose through the ability of a non-medical American to convert distress into constructive action. Following an anaesthetic accident in 1976, Mrs Barbara Seiden developed severe action myoclonus. Lewis Seiden, her husband, became a meticulous observer of her clinical condition, noting among other things, an exacerbation late in each menstrual cycle. This observation led to the demonstration of a therapeutic effect of synthetic oestrogen. Mr Seiden's concern and drive caused the physicians at the Columbia Neurological Institute to enlarge their interest in the problem of hypoxic brain damage and secondary myoclonus and, subsequently, to hold a Symposium at Sterling Forest in 1978. The majority of the participants were East Coast neurologists. They have provided very useful reviews and case reports concerning hypoxic coma, action myoclonus, epilepsy and hypoxia, and anoxic/ischaemic brain damage. Four European neuroscientists were invited to discuss relevant experimental studies. John Blass and Gary Gibson provide a thoughtful account of the ways in which cerebral hypoxia may depress neurotransmitter synthesis. Frans Jöbsis describes his remarkable in vivo measurements of the oxidation state of cytochromes.

The volume is abundantly illustrated and beautifully produced (but contains a large number of misprints). The inclusion of a transcript of the discussion is informative and conveys very well the concern of the participants to learn about the causes and nature of hypoxic brain damage.

This appears to be only the third International symposium on this topic. Earlier ones were held at Baden in 1961 (*Selective Vulnerability of the Brain in Hypoxaemia*, Blackwell, 1963) and at Carshalton in 1970 (*Brain Hypoxia*, W Heinemann, 1971). Let us hope that the rate of

acquisition of new knowledge will, in future, lead to a shortening of the interval between symposia. If this comes to pass, it will be in no small measure the result of the compassionate concern of Mr Seiden, the prime progenitor of this volume.

BS MELDRUM

Recent advances in clinical psychiatry: number 3 By K Granville-Grossman (pp 339, ill., Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone) 1979.

The first volume in this series, published in 1971, was a tour de force: written by Dr Granville-Grossman, it surveyed almost all the important issues in psychiatry in a scholarly, lucid, succinct and readable style. Volume 2, edited by Dr Granville-Grossman but written by 12 authors, appeared in 1976 and was, in parts, rather disappointing. This third volume is again a multi-author work with only one chapter by the editor (a stimulating study of what might have been considered a *demodé* topic, the psychiatric aspects of cannabis use) and nine chapters by other hands (including three pairs and one trio of hands—or rather authors). Although he has not quite achieved what he himself did in 1971, the editor has got his expert contributors to produce a group of up to date reviews on important topics in clinical psychiatry, ranging from child psychiatry, through research on schizophrenia, to the organic psychiatry of old age. There are sections also on transcultural psychiatry, psychiatric endocrinology, alcohol dependence and forensic psychiatry. Two chapters on everyday topics deserve special mention because of their detailed coverage of the extensive literature and because of their excellent bibliographies—Paykell and Rowan on affective disorders and Tyrer on anxiety states. But the whole book is to be commended. Anyone interested in advances in clinical psychiatry should have a copy; anyone interested in clinical psychiatry at all should consult it in the library.

JL GIBBONS