Topical Reviews in Neurosurgery, Volume 1. Edited by JM Rice Edwards. (Pp 192; £17.50.) Bristol: Wright PSG, 1982.

This compact book is the first volume of Topical Reviews of Recent Progress and Current Trends in Neurosurgery. There are eight chapters, one supposes the Editor's "Desert Island Neurosurgical Discs"? The first chapter by Jennett on Efficacy, Efficiency and Adequacy in Neurosurgery was, for the reviewer, a difficult, but important chapter. Neurosurgeons will have to justify the facilities that either they enjoy or wish to enjoy; they will have to pay more attention to their efficiency (for instance, by asking for more rehabilitation facilities, thus increasing the ease of discharging patients from expensive neurosurgical beds) and dare one wonder how often the discharge rate is determined by the number of available beds, rather than the needs of the patients? Also they will have to ask themselves if their efforts are really producing worthwhile benefits to the patients. Jennett uses his head injury experience to demonstrate this theme, but the reviewer has often wondered whether much of the major surgery carried out for malignant gliomas is of worthwhile benefit, bearing in mind the palliation provided by dexamethazone. It is often stated that removal of the bulk of the tumour aids radiotherapy and chemotherapy, but is this really true in practice? As Hyde once said, the ability to carry out a certain technical exercise does not always mean it is in the patient's interests to do it. But nothing makes neurosurgeons (and no doubt they are no different from other surgeons) more defensive and emotional than discussions on number of either beds or consultants per unit population. The politicians are already upon us and we must counter their arguments with facts, rather than emotion! Professor Jennett's chapter, like the monarchy, "encourages, advises and warns", but Jennett does not give us the answers.

Kendall provides an excellent review of the advances in computed tomography. The reviewer found the technical aspects difficult to follow, no doubt a reflection on him, rather than the author. The clinical aspects were of great fascination. Clearly, spinal canal and cord CT will be increasingly used, and the fact that Kendall has found a syrinx in some patients with normal sized cords, as shown by myelography, will no doubt bring to mind patients from the past, who "should have had a syrinx, but on myelography, did not".

Two eminent physicians provide chapters. Harrison considers carotid endarterectomy. His review is comprehensive, but could not escape the myriad of figures that exist in this literature. Indeed, one wonders if slavish digestion of the figures really adds to one's understanding of the subject. Dare one say it, but perhaps there are too many numbers and it was a relief to come to Dr Harrison's "policy", which is to recommend endarterectomy for a patient with transient ischaemic attacks, who has ipsilateral carotid stenosis—given sufficient surgical competence being available. He favours aspirin for attacks arising from carotid artery ulceration. The reviewer does not share Dr Harrison's fear of ulcerated carotid arteries, and feels that more neurosurgeons should undertake carotid endarterectomy in the United Kingdom. It is not difficult surgery, but it requires a gentle touch, for as Harrison says peroperative emboli are probably the main cause of postoperative cerebral infarction, and hence his disaffection towards surgery for ulcerated carotid arteries. John Marshall gives an admirably clear account of possible indications for EC-IC anastomoses. Indeed, "an operation looking for patients", but how true his statement is that each patient's pathological physiology must be assessed before sensible decisions can be made about management—a truism that perhaps allows one to be guided, but not unduly fettered by all those figures in the previous chapter. However, the reviewer can not allow Professor Marshall to get away with his statement that fashioning a superficial temporal middle cerebral by-pass, prior to operating upon a giant middle cerebral artery aneurysm, will provide an insurance against ischaemia or infarction. It does not!

Thomas reviews the chemotherapy of gliomas. Much careful work has been done, but the results are conflicting. Perhaps with the first chapter fresh in mind, many readers will feel that chemotherapy for gliomas is not yet sufficiently efficacious to be used in most patients. However, this is an excellent review for those wishing to be actively involved in this important research which may well become the treatment of choice in the future.

Guthkelch demonstrates there is still much to be understood about chronic subdural haematomas, whilst Symon describes Professor Logue's transtemporal approach for craniopharyngiomas. This approach deserves to be more widely known. The reviewer was a little surprised to read Pro-

fessor Symon's implied acquiescence that detailed endocrine investigation can be deferred to the post-operative period and that dexamethazone and DDAVP were the key to the peri-operative endocrine management. The reviewer would personally stress the difficult post-operative fluid and electrolyte problems that can occur, especially in children. Water retention can rapidly produce worrying postoperative (and indeed, post-investigation if one still uses, as does Symon it seems, air encephalography) epilepsy or drowsiness, that can be a most severe test of expertise in fluid and electrolyte management. Indeed, these difficulties fully justify the close co-operation of a suitably experienced physician, together with facilities for frequent weighing of the patient and repeated laboratory electrolyte estimations. Perhaps the fact that only three out of ninety-four patients were under ten, explains this differing experience and emphasis.

The editor contributed a chapter on syringomyelia. This subject stimulates diverse, yet strongly held views; views indeed so strongly expressed that those of us looking on from outside might be forgiven for feeling that there could be an element of religious fervour in the air. Rice Edwards chapter is notable for what it lacks in religious fervour it makes up for by a most clear, balanced and helpful review of a difficult subject. But it seems that more clarification is needed between the pathology and the theories of pathogenesis and one suspects that when this becomes available Mr Rice Edwards will find himself changing his classification. Hopefully, he will review this topic for us again in the future.

This book is readable, stimulating and beneficial. It satisfies a need. But, without wishing to be devious, is it not a little surprising that no practising neurosurgeon in the United Kingdom, outside London, was asked to contribute a chapter? I can report that neurosurgery is well and flourishing outside London, and moreover there are neurosurgeons who do EC-IC anastomoses, and furthermore they can write! No doubt the editor will look further afield in the future. I hope that this mild lament will not disguise my admiration for the contributors and their contributions, nor my strong commendation for this first edition of hopefully many future editions.

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