Concepts in Pediatric Neurosurgery 4. Edited by Robin P Humphreys. (Pp 394; \$139.00) Basel: S Karger AG 1983.

How fortunate is the American Society for Pediatric Neurosurgery to see an edited record of its annual meeting produced so quickly and in such an attractive form. This fourth volume is up to the standard of its predecessors and covers a wide range of topics which are either peculiar to the paediatric age group (such as neural tube defects, tethered spinal cord, even foetal neurosurgery) or conditions which have particular importance in childhood such as craniofacial dysraphism, medulloblastoma and, of course, hydrocephalus. Many of the 26 chapters report the extensive experience of the authors and would be of great value to the general neurosurgeons in the UK who, from time to time, deal with these childhood conditions. Other chapters reflect the active research in the USA and Canada where it is realised how much remains to be discovered. Examples of these are studies on animal models of intraventricular haemorrhage, approaches to foetal neurosurgery, and *in vitro* studies of human medulloblastoma.

Beautifully produced, with adequate references and provided with an editorial comment at the end of each chapter, this volume of the series (which I think would better have been titled "Progress in Pediatric Neurosurgery") is commended, but there has to be the usual complaint about the high price of such a book.

KENNETH TILL

Neuro-ophthalmology 1984: Vol. 3. Edited by S Lessell and JTW van Dalen. (Pp 435; \$73.00) Amsterdam: Elsevier Science Publishers, 1984.

The current medical publishing process has obviously not neglected A de Morgan's view on a lesser subject, "great fleas have little fleas upon their backs to bite 'em, and little fleas have lesser fleas and so ad infinitum". Matters of interest to neuro-ophthalmologists appear in a wide assortment of journals covering medicine, paediatrics, endocrinology, immunology and physiology to mention but a few. In addition to the major national journals in ophthalmology and neurology there are two new journals devoted entirely to neuro-ophthalmology and, as the introduction to this book states, a clinical neuro-ophthalmology paper may be submitted to any of 20 journals. To keep abreast of all

this information demands a gargantuan effort for the individual, and hence the need for the present book with a review of the literature published mainly during the period 1981-1982.

The present volume divides this task between 28 experts in their fields and the result is 416 pages and over 2000 references. The success of this recipe is manifest by the fact that this is the third volume in the series. Commencing with the fundus, the chapters progress in anatomical order to the cortex, and then the major part of the book (130 pages) is concerned with the ocular motor system.

Smaller assorted chapters conclude the volume with reference to stroke, visual fields, the orbit, pupil and recent investigative techniques.

The chapters vary in literary style, and critical appraisal but tend to provide a critical review of any significant papers published in the assigned period. This volume would therefore seem an essential purchase for any neurologist with an interest in this subject. Many chapters have a useful conclusion either concentrating the readers' mind on the highlights, or providing a summary of the chapter. The optimism characteristic of those interested in this subject will not be saddened by one conclusion. "This was another year without a significant medical eyelid breakthrough".

The editors are to be congratulated on assembling such an able team and performing such a valuable service to the neurosciences community.

MICHAEL SANDERS

Evoked Potentials in Clinical Medicine. By Keith H Chiappa. (Pp. 352; \$42.50.) New York: Raven Press, 1983.

Written for medical and paramedical personnel who use evoked potentials for clinical diagnosis and evaluation, the author aims in this book to provide a starting point from which the reader can build. He writes "Interested readers can confuse themselves to any desired degree by reading the literature which is amply referenced, if not discussed".

The contents fall into three sections, visual, brainstem, auditory and somatosensory evoked potentials. Each section has chapters on methodology which together with an introductory chapter also on methodology make up one third or so of the book. Much of this is repetitive and there are better accounts of the technology of evoked potentials elsewhere. Twelve per

cent of the pages are references, fully and accurately set out in each section. It is rare to see a reference dated before 1970; this is partly a reflection of the recent development of clinical evoked potentials and partly, may one suspect, that computerised literature searches do not go back earlier.

The meat of the book is in the accounts of the clinical findings. To include all published work the writer has adopted the pattern stringing together authors, date, diagnosis, findings, authors, date . . . etc. This is an effective way of imparting information but does not generate understanding. What we need to know is under what circumstances will evoked potential findings influence a clinical diagnosis or management. This information will only emerge in the fullness of time and this book only touches on it and sometimes shies away from it as, for example, with the paediatric applications of brainstem auditory potentials. Many of the reports included can only be regarded as preliminary and awaiting confirmation and elaboration. In some parts the evoked potential findings are related to clinical and other neurophysiological findings; this useful approach is evident in the section on somatosensory evoked potentials and in the consideration of multiple sclerosis. This gives the evoked potentials a clinical perspective which is most valuable. There are many good figures which are adequately captioned so that they can be instructive without the accompanying text. Low amplitude potentials are illustrated by superimposing two plots, an admirable practice which increases the confidence of the reader.

The section on somatosensory evoked potentials is written in part by Con Yiamikas of Sydney, Australia and maintains a high standard with its thoughtful reviews. It is of interest that the authors adopt an idiosyncratic view of the origin of the N13 potential recorded from the neck. They attribute it to the cervico-medullary junction. Gasser and Graham's observations (1933) and many following them may be old but they should not be overlooked. In this and in other sections the importance of unilateral stimulation is stressed as the "normal" side may well swamp an abnormal response from the "bad" side if simultaneous bilateral stimulation is used.

Brain death is considered but the concept of brainstem death is not mentioned. The findings in coma are many but there is no clear statement of whether evoked potentials are any better as prognostic indicators and clinical findings.