Headache. (Series in Clinical Epidemiology.) By William Estlin Waters. (Pp 156; £17.95.) Beckenham: Croom Helm Ltd, 1986.

Epidemiological data about headache are sparse. Almost all of the many published series suffer from serious defects both of definition and of precise clinical categorisation of each patient. A book devoted to this topic is thus welcome, and brings with it the hope that careful analysis will shed new light on the many unanswered questions or, at least, provoke new approaches.

This compact book will answer a number of pertinent questions about headache. If, for instance, you want to know its prevalence, its age and sex distribution, the economic cost of absence from work, or data on family or twin prevalence, then the available epidemiological data are collected here with appropriate references.

Essentially, this book republishes much of Waters' earlier work in the Rhondda Fach and expands its background. It argues that migraine is "part of the continuum of headache, similar to the concept of hypertension in relation to the continuum of blood pressure." It tells us "there is remarkably little evidence that migraine is qualitatively different from other headaches." The clinician's enthusiasm for the taxonomic identity of migraine is thus challenged, but unfortunately is not replaced by anything else of substance.

Much of the book attempts to deal with the important problems of definition, and it tries (many would say in vain) to justify the epidemiologist's use of questionnaires as a valid tool of investigation. Until some objective observation or test is agreed as a diagnostic yardstick, the collection of soft data can yield only the most rough and ready information; and when such a test materialises all the arguments adduced for questionnaires will fall by the wayside. Other sections deal sketchily with historical aspects, treatment, underlying causes and diet: these fail to do justice to these aspects of headache and would have been better left to existing clinically orientated texts.

In a nicely produced format, the author has made a commendable effort to cast a critical eye on contemporary problems of definition and provokes us to question the validity of the terms "syndrome" and "cause". Unfortunately, he provides few answers. It is likely that the data obtained by epidemiologists will be as shaky and possibly less secure than those obtained by good clinicians who have at least individually questioned and examined each patient.

JMS PEARCE

Brain CT: An Introduction By John R Bradshaw (Pp 199; £9.95.) Bristol: Wright, 1985

This short book begins with a very brief description of the basic principles of CT scanning of the brain, a series of clearly labelled scans illustrating simple normal anatomy and a few common artefacts and normal variants.

The main text comprises a series of case studies in which common pathological conditions are divided according to their various CT appearances, for example low density non enhancing, low density enhancing, high density non enhancing etc. For each there is a brief history, a number of good quality scans presenting the features, a short discussion on the differential diagnosis and why the final diagnosis is most likely. The case studies of which there are 86 are set out to enable the reader to attempt a diagnosis on the history and CT appearances before moving to the text.

I personally find the format where cases are divided into their density and enhancing characteristics over simplistic and often misleading; inter alia it leads to cross referencing which is confusing where some of the more common pathologies are discussed under more than one heading. Some of the cases shown whilst they are reasonable are not entirely typical of the conditions which they represent and in a book of such limited scope I feel this is an additional error.

Despite these criticisms I feel this book has some merit. The illustrations alone will help some of the readers the book is aimed at, namely junior medical staff, nurses, radiographers and medical students.

TCS COX

Microneurosurgical Atlas. By Kenichiro Sugita (Pp 275; \$245.00.) New York: Springer-Verlag, 1985.

All surgeons love to talk about their difficult cases; like the conversations of fishermen and golfers, such tales should not always be taken at face value! Prof Sugita's book makes it clear that he does have exceptional talents as a neurosurgeon, but he also has an exceptional ability to resist the temptation to gloss over failure or to exaggerate success. His book is a tribute to his analytical, self critical approach, which underlies his important contributions to the evolution and refinement of microneurosurgical techniques.

The book consists of six sections but the first two, General Considerations and Instruments, are dealt with in only nine pages. The four major sections concern the surgery of aneurysms, of arteriovenous malformations, of meningiomas, and of neuromas and other brain tumours. Although each starts with a consideration of basic principles, the author's message is conveyed mainly through detailed descriptions of more than 100 different operations. Each is illustrated by an attractive, clear, and informative drawing. The reader is helped to gain the maximum information from each case from reproduction of the pre and post operative radiographs, and from concise accounts which emphasise the critical parts of the operation. The author's comments upon what lessons he learnt from that particular case are particularly valuable; these include both demonstrations of what is possible, and also what he learnt not to do again, even the admission that some operations might better have not been carried out. The occasional references to the occurrence of "massive haemorrhage" and of the surgeon being afraid, not only paint a vivid picture, but also leave no doubt that the account is scrupulously true.

The conviction of the message is an important consideration, because this is not a book for the beginner, for whom there are more didactic, dogmatic texts available. Instead this is more of a diary, in which the author shares his experience with other neurosurgeons. Most of Professor Sugita's messages are now widely accepted: the value of the author's specially designed aneurysm clips, the use of multiple clips in difficult circumstances; the various methods for prevention or control of bleeding in vascular lesions and tumours; the benefits of retraction of tumours with the author's specially designed hooks; and also the need to accept that parts of benign basal tumours might best be left rather than risk damage during complete removal.

One criticism is that rather too much emphasis is placed upon unusual cases; thus, the section on aneurysms of the vertebrobasilar system is twice as long as that on aneurysms of the anterior circulation, which are several times more common. The section on acoustic neuromas is somewhat superficial; it is the only one in which the author does not present individual cases but simply refers to general principles. These sometimes lack precise directions, for example about exactly how to use anatomy to locate the origin of the facial nerve, or the anterior inferior cerebellar artery, and about how to avoid damage to these structures.

Book reviews

The advice given that "care is necessary" contrasts with his detailed descriptions elsewhere of exactly how to take care. The use of adjuncts to operation such as ultrasonic aspiration and the laser receives little mention, but this is not an important gap.

Professor Sugita points out that it is more easy to solve problems outside the operating theatre than when faced with a difficulty inside. His book will undoubtedly help others to approach difficult or unexpected problems with a greater range of options. It will be enjoyed by all neurosurgeons; I believe that almost all will want also to have it readily available to refer to in moments of need.

GRAHAM TEASDALE

brand name, proprietary brand name, and forms available, i.e. tablets, elixir, injections, etc. are given. The structure of each drug is pictorially represented, pharmacokinetics are considered and dosage recommendations are stated; one is also given a clear account of the mode of action, side effects, contra-indications, precautions, drug interactions, dependence potential and overdose implications for each drug, with additional information where relevant.

This concise, readable, easy to carry, reasonably priced book is much needed and is highly recommended to both libraries and to individuals.

MARY ROBERTSON

emergencies is inadequate and omits important topics such as problems arising from drug abuse. Child and adolescent psychiatry is not covered and this represents a major deficiency in the book, as students may have to purchase an additional book to cover this field.

Re-reading this book was like meeting an old friend, clearly recognisable, somewhat overweight, but with much new experience to report. The book remains in the mainstream of psychiatry and is sound in all respects although it might have given more emphasis to psychiatric practice outside the hospital. The very age of the book recommends it, in that it gives a clear view of the evolution of psychiatry in the last thirty years. The book can be confidently recommended to medical students; it will serve them well as it did the reviewer.

RHS MINDHAM

Guide to the Use of Psychotropic Drugs. By Donald Gillies and Malcolm Lader. (Pp 532; £14.95.) Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone, 1986.

This superb book comprises three sections. In the first, the authors concisely describe the major symptoms found in various psychiatric conditions including organic states, epilepsy, schizophrenia, affective disorders, neuroses, psychosomatic eating and sexual disorders, alcoholism and drug dependence. In this reviewer's opinion, the aim of this section is both to acquaint the reader with the disorders, emphasising the particular relevance of the conditions to the use of psychotropic drugs, and further to state the authors' views on the subject. The authors have struck a nice balance between giving sufficient information for those not familiar with the topic whilst acknowledging that for trained people this does not pretend to be a text book on psychiatry.

In the second section, the general properties of each class of psychotropic drug, namely the antidepressive, anxiolytic, hypnotic agents and lithium are outlined, together with their chemical actions, usage and side effects. As the authors point out, the area is a large one, and they have taken care to "try and give a consensus view of the more controversial topics". In addition, both similarities and differences between the drug classes are highlighted.

The meat of the book is the third section, which comprises 471 pages of solid, easily accessible information on the properties of the individual psychotropic agents. The drugs are listed in alphabetical order, and for each one a wealth of information is supplied. The indications, the chemical group,

Psychological Medicine. An Introduction to Psychiatry. 10th ed. By Peter Storey (Pp 484; £12.95.) Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone, 1986.

The first edition of this book appeared in 1943 and there have since been nine further versions making it one of the oldest established text-books of psychiatry for undergraduates. The fourth edition was used by the reviewer as a student; a good deal of the style and layout have been retained, but with considerable revision.

The book presents an eminently sensible, wide-ranging and useful view of psychiatry for the undergraduate. The descriptive approach is adopted throughout but with reference to other approaches and influences. The text is helped by detailed accounts of the clinical features of psychiatric disorders, including examples of the changes observed in the mental states of psychiatrically disordered subjects. There is a summary at the end of each chapter which undergraduates will find helpful in revision.

There are some weaknesses in the book which might be dealt with in a subsequent edition; the account of psychiatric classification is a personal one and reference to the International Classification of Diseases might be more appropriate and helpful to the student in becoming familiar with attempts at classifying disorders on an international scale; the classification of dementias is old fashioned and should be revised; the management of dementing illness is almost restricted to diagnosis and should be expanded to include general management, social and legal matters; the use of the electroencephalogram in diagnosis has probably been largely superseded by computed tomography; the description of psychiatric

Spina Bifida and Neural Tube Defects. Edited by D Voth and P Glees in collaboration with J Lorber. (Pp 320; DM148.00.) Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1986.

The subtitle of this book promises much—"Basic research, interdisciplinary diagnostics, results and prognosis". It is not, as might therefore be expected, a text book. Once more we have a record of a meeting, this time of a "workshop". If it really was a workshop, then its value would have been in the discussions and informal coming together of workers in different disciplines, not in the essays offered here.

The introductory review by Lorber of the changing incidence of spina bifida in different parts of the world is helpful and mildly provocative. Sections on experimental neural tube defects, on early brain morphogenesis, on primary prevention of spina bifida cystica, on selective treatment and on other aspects in this collection of 39 essays are also of value either as reviews or reports of original work. Fortunately the breathtaking brevity of "Diagnosis and treatment of the tethered spinal cord syndrome" in 23 lines is not typical of the contributions. Nor is the irrelevance of a contribution on arachnoid cysts of the Sylvian fissure or that on coloboma.

This is a book for the departmental library; but I wish publishers would overcome their shyness about announcing on the title page that they are offering a report of proceedings.

KENNETH TILL