Current Therapy in Neurological Surgery 1985-1986. Edited by Donlin L Long. (Pp 238; £42.00.) Oxford: Blackwell Scientific Publications, 1985.

This volume in the *Current Therapy* series seeks to provide the "interested practitioner with a specific opinion by an expert which suggests an effective mode of therapy for an individual patient".

It is a multi-author, North American text covering a broad spectrum of neurosurgery in refreshingly short chapters which are clearly subdivided and easily read. The editor's intention is to focus on therapy at the expense of aetiology, pathology, diagnosis and natural history. The book often fails to accomplish this, partly because the therapy of a disease process varies according to the mode of presentation and attendant complications. Where an author follows strictly the editorial guidelines, the result is often a valueless introduction followed by descriptive operative surgery.

Sadly, the book contains no references and furthermore, most authors give concise treatment recommendations with no figures to substantiate their argument. This devalues the text and is a surprising omission as these considerable authorities must have these figures readily available. A further general criticism is the lack of any illustrations rendering some of the operative descriptions incomprehensible. Those of us who have never seen the anterior approach to the foramen magnum find it very hard to understand why one suddenly switches mid-operation from a lateral submandibular dissection to a "midline lip-splitting incision".

In its present format, this book will be useful both as a revision aid for post-graduate examinations and, to lawyers, as a lucid summary of consensus Neurosurgical Management in 1985!

PD LEES

Frontiers in Biochemical and Pharmacological Research in Depression (Advances in Biochemical Pharmacology Series Volume 39.) Edited by Earl Usdin, Marie Asberg, Leif Bertilsson and Folke Sjöqvist. (Pp 482; \$93.50.) New York: Raven Press, 1984.

This book provides in 42 detailed chapters the material presented at a Nobel Conference in 1984. The subjects covered range principally from basic neuropharmacology to the clinical pharmacology of depression. There are also chapters on changes in neuro-

peptides and in neuroendocrine systems in depression. The standard throughout the book is uniformly high. Unfortunately there are a number of competitors on the market which are also of a high standard and which by virtue of much larger lists of references will be of more value as reference books.

STUART CHECKLEY

Neurological Problems in the Elderly. Edited by Marion Hildick-Smith. (Pp 251; £20.00.) London: Bailliere Tindall/WB Saunders, 1985.

This nicely produced paperback is an attempt by one of our very best geriatric physicians to provide a more rational basis for the management of elderly patients with neurological disorders.

At a time when medical and surgical services are being straightened throughout the Health Service, one of life's unexplained wonders is the continued sponsorship of the expansion of geriatrics by the DHSS. With the growing recognition of the enormous problems, medical and social, presented by the elderly, geriatricians are faced with major clinical problems, a high proportion of which are neurological. That such problems are often badly handled, both by over-zealous investigation and by omission, is widely recognised; this book may be seen as an attempt to rectify this situation.

Introductory chapters review some of the "normal" aberrations of the ageing process from those signifying disease. They survey clinical signs (Stern), neurochemistry (Wilcock) and the examination and investigation (Caird). There follows an extensive section on strokes and TIAs, then a series of essays on Parkinsonism, epilepsy (Hildick-Smith), confusional states, dementia, balance and falls. The final chapters deal with disturbances of bladder and bowel, autonomic disorders, neuropathies and myopathies and a useful section on neurosurgical decisions in the elderly (Bartlett).

The text does not attempt to be comprehensive. There is for example no discussion of the common problem of headaches, and but brief mention of motor neuron disease. It does, however, present an attractive, and on the whole, well written series of essays which are provided with selective and commendably up to date references. The quality is uneven.

I found the early chapters on normal ageing most helpful. The important chapters on cerebrovascular disease provide a good deal of factual information about

epidemiology, but the geriatrician remains as uncertain as the neurologist about the indications for angiography, thromboendarterectomy and anti-platelet drugs. Mulley points out that even non-invasive techniques should not be performed except as a prelude to angiography; perhaps he undervalues digital vascular imaging as a technique, though in this age group the therapeutic dividends must be very small. The chapters on neuropathies, dementia and the confusional states and on disorders of balance are unsatisfactory, containing little more than can be found in a student's textbook. Multiple sclerosis and cervical spondylosis are found under the heading of Neuropathies. The latter, an important and common problem in the elderly receives but scant attention, and the equally important topic of vertigo is never clearly untangled from a general appraisal of dizziness.

There is a lasting impression that those who treat the aged are trying almost too hard to keep abreast of the neurosciences, but are insecure in their application in organic nervous disease. Surely, much of the art of the physician is the recognition of patterns of illness and natural history, with the attendant implication of knowing when and especially when *not* to intervene. This approach is surprisingly lacking in some of the advice given. Despite these reservations, this will prove to be a useful contribution to an exiguous part of the clinical literature and I warmly recommend it to the consultants and junior doctors in geriatric medicine for whom it is intended.

JMS PEARCE

An Early History of Craniotomy. From Antiquity to the Napoleonic Era. By Louis Bakay. (Pp 150; \$22.75.) Illinois: Charles C Thomas, 1985.

This is a history for the general reader and particularly for those whose ideas of the precedents of neurosurgery are rather vague. Dr Bakay begins his story with neolithic trepanation, and ends with the early nineteenth century, on the grounds that there were no developments from that time until the beginning of the modern era on account of the high mortality from sepsis.

The majority of craniotomies in the historical times within the period under consideration were for the treatment of head injuries. Many of the surgeons had military experience, and debate was as much about the indications for operation as the technique.

Many authors are referred to, and we are told that most of the sources were translated by Dr Bakay, some for the first time; their origin was the rare book collection of the State University of New York at Buffalo. It is unfortunate, however, that references to these texts are limited in the degree of detail necessary for scholarly use. The author interpolates quotations from Latin and other texts at frequent intervals. For what purpose? Is it to check the accuracy of translation or to lend an air of learning? There is seldom any linguistic problem. "... wounds in the middle portion of the head (in media capitis partum)" for instance, or "... covered with flesh (carne)". One is tempted to hoist Dr Bakay with his own petard by reference to his remark that "... although the wound surgeons quoted the old authorities, they did so mostly to show a semblance of erudition."

The development of craniotomy as a science rather than a craft, depended on advances in anatomical and physiological knowledge, and along with the chronological sequence of writings on the operative aspects, there are notes on the progress in these directions. Many brave surgeons operated on even braver patients long before neurosurgery as we know it became a possibility, and their efforts are given full credit.

This book would make an excellent present for any person concerned with cranial trauma or with an interest in the surgery of the nervous system. It is fascinating reading, and at the same time a pleasant source of relaxation.

PETER H SCHURR

Concepts in Pediatric Neurosurgery Vol 6. Edited by Paul H Chapman. (Pp 244; £54.40.) Basel: S Karger AG, 1985.

This smoothly running and beautifully turned out vehicle for the publication of selected papers which were presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Society for Pediatric Neurosurgery once more makes its annual appearance. It must be very difficult for the editor to choose the 20 or so papers from the many that were presented at the meeting. Nevertheless, there is a tendency for familiar names to recur in successive volumes. This is presumably because large departments of paediatric neurosurgery are likely to have much to offer, whether it be "Concepts" or summaries of experience.

The editor states in his preamble that "the subjects addressed were varied and at times

controversial as benefits a workshop format. The reader is heartily invited to join the intellectual skirmish..." It is not clear how one is to enter the "skirmish", but simply to read the papers is rewarding. Among the formidable challenges to paediatric neurosurgeons, the following are discussed: telemetric ICP measurement in patients with normal sized or enlarged ventricles, the management of congenital brain tumours, the reconstruction of large skull defects, surgical treatment of moya moya in children and atypical features with atypical management of childhood aneurysms.

Altogether this volume, like its predecessors, provides much of value for neurosurgeons who treat children. It is a pity that it costs almost as much as a year's subscription to most neurological or neurosurgical journals.

KENNETH TILL

Neural Grafting in the Mammalian CNS. (Fernstrom Foundation Series.) Edited by Anders Bjorklund and Ulf Stenevi. (Pp 728; \$157.50.) Amsterdam: Elsevier Science Publishers, 1985.

The concept of neuronal grafting in brain and the possibility of reinnervation of damaged tissue is one of the most exciting current growth areas in the neurosciences. The scientific content of this volume is of the highest quality and in the information it contains both educates and exhilarates the reader with the potential such techniques may hold for the future.

Most readers will presume that neuronal grafting in brain is a production of the neuroscience explosion of the last decade. However, in an informative historical introduction by the editors, it becomes clear that it is almost 100 years since the first experiments were undertaken. Key discoveries, such as the privileged immunological status of the brain found in the 1920s, are described so that the reader grasps the basis on which the recent experiments were undertaken.

The volume details the methodology utilised in neural grafting and then described the evidence for the immunological, histological and electrophysiological success that can be achieved using grafting techniques. There follows a series of chapters dealing with the specific application of neural grafting to dopaminergic and cholinergic systems and to endocrine systems. Of particular interest are the sections which indicate the relevance of such methodology to Parkinson's

disease and Alzheimer's disease. The functional success of neuronal grafts in restoring motor and learning deficits may herald major advances in disease treatment for the future. The volume also contains the details of the first grafts carried out on Parkinsonian patients. Although not dramatically successful, they indicate the application of methodology developed in animals to clinical use in man. If such technology is to gain acceptance in man there are obvious moral issues which are to be overcome involving the use of human foetal tissue in such transplantation. Otherwise, cell culture techniques may provide an answer or employing nerve growth factors may allow use of adult tissues which presently appear unsuitable.

The volume is a major work in the field of neural grafting. It is one which many will wish to consult. It is only unfortunate that the price will prohibit most individuals and many libraries from adding it to their collection.

P JENNER

Behaviour and Pathology of Aging in Rhesus Monkeys. Monographs in Primatology Series Vol 8. Edited by Roger T Davis and Charles W Leathers. (Pp 380; £67.00.) New York: Alan R Liss Inc, 1985.

With considerable increase of average life expectancy in many industrialised countries, interest in research on ageing has expanded in recent years. This increased awareness is reflected not only by new journals, but also by monographs covering various aspects of senescence both in man and animal. The search to find an appropriate animal model has intensified and our closest relatives, the primates, present the most promising, and expensive, avenue to explore.

This volume in the series *Monographs in Primatology* examines the behaviour and pathology of ageing in rhesus monkeys. The emphasis is on pathology and the chapters are mostly grouped in sections on basic pathology and cell growth; brain, sense organs and behaviour; endocrine system; heart and lung, and bone and muscle. The concept of the book is modern and multidisciplinary, and is far removed from descriptive pathology. Readers of this Journal will find the chapters on the brain and behaviour and on muscles nearer to their interest than those dealing with other organs. The chapter on the neuropathological, neurochemical and behavioural studies is particularly informative and provides an essential reading for those interested in the ageing brain and demencias.

PL LANTOS