are eight sections: the contributions of the President and the Honoured Guest, Perspectives in Neurosurgery, Cerebrovascular surgery, Paediatric neurosurgery, Spinal surgery, Intracranial tumours, Infections and Neurosurgical treatment of vertigo.

The underlying theme of the book is controversy in neurosurgery. The second section deals with decision making and in particular the implications of a competitive market system not only for neurosurgical management but upon medical education and research. The potential effects upon neurosurgical training programmes are discussed by the President. The ethical, legal, and medical considerations of a decision not to treat are discussed in relationship to the competence of the patient. The playwright Brian Clark in discussing the patient's role, concludes that the population at large, including the medical profession, must come to terms with its own mortality before a patient can take a full and confident role in the making of a decision. Such considerations will become increasingly important to practitioners in Britain as we are required continuously to improve the cost effectiveness of our decisions and face the legal consequences thereof.

The remaining sections deal with more specific neurosurgical problems and often writers present contrary views. Topics covered include: aneurysm surgery (the questions of incidental aneurysms, use of antifibrinolytic agents, and the timing of surgery); the management of unruptured arteriovenous malformations; the surgery and management of ischaemic vascular disease including asymptomatic carotid disease and extracranial-intracranial bypass in the light of the multicentre EC-IC Bypass Study; the evaluation of in utero treatment of hydrocephalus and the advocacy of a more aggressive surgical policy in the management of myelomeningocele than that widely in vogue in Britain; chemonucleolysis versus lumbar microdissection, the latter versus conventional surgery and the place of lumbar fusion; the roles of surgery, radiotherapy and chemotherapy in craniopharyngioma, prolactinoma, Cushing's disease and low grade astrocytoma; medical and surgical management of brain abscess and the use of prophylactic antibiotics; microvascular decompression or vestibular nerve section for vertigo.

This is an excellent book which should be read by all neurosurgical trainees and practising neurosurgeons. It is strongly bound and well produced on high quality paper with only the occasional typographical error. It is a pity that the price is so high, especially for a book which will inevitably be

superceded by later volumes in the same series.

MDM SHAW

Syringobulbia: A Contribution to the Pathophysiology of the Brainstem. By N Jonesco-Sisesti. Translated into English, edited and annotated by RT Ross. (Pp 314; \$49.00.) New York: Praeger Publishers, 1986.

A whole volume devoted to the relatively rare syndrome of syringobulbia seems at first sight to be excessive and one's fears are increased when one realises the book is a translation of an original publication in French in 1932. But the fears are groundless; *Syringobulbia* by Dr Jonesco-Sisesti and translated by Professor RT Ross is neither excessive nor excessively verbose. Professor Ross explains in his introduction that Dr J Goodwin Greenfield brought the original to his attention many years ago and intimated that it should be translated into English.

The translator has succeeded admirably and the review of 100 patients culled from the literature prior to 1932 together with a further 11 from the records of the Salpêtrière provides a solid foundation for a description of the anatomy, clinical features and pathology of syringobulbia. There are remarkably few aspects of clinical presentations, differential diagnosis and pathological anatomy in which the past 50 years has altered our knowledge but at the end of each chapter Professor Ross provides an addendum which reviews the literature of the intervening years and contains some personal opinions. The most evident change in the management of syringobulbia since the original publication is in the field of investigation and particularly the advent of non-invasive CT and MRI. Examples of these are furnished by the translator in a chapter dealing with differential diagnosis. The clarity of the scan pictures and of the sections of brain stem is a compliment to the publishers and whilst it is slightly annoying to be continually relating a description on one page to a photograph several pages away this does not detract greatly from the enjoyment of the book.

It cannot be claimed that *Syringobulbia* is essential reading for all students of neurology but it is a welcome addition to a neurology reference library. It is suggested that "knowledge which is not readily accessible soon becomes lost" and in this respect all those who are not fluent in French but who are interested in neurology will applaud Professor Ross for his effort.

DAVID BATES

The Practising Physician's Approach to Headache 4th ed. Edited by Seymour Diamond and Donald J Dalessio. (Pp 240; £36.00.) Baltimore: Williams & Wilkins, 1986.

The fact that this is the fourth edition since 1975 of this handy physician's guide is testimony to its worth and popularity in the United States. The well known editors assisted by ten specialist colleagues hope "to demonstrate a definitive approach to both the diagnosis and the treatment of headache. An attempt has been made to keep the text uncluttered, simple and easy to read and follow."

The book spans some 220 pages divided into 20 chapters. It is beautifully produced and illustrated. Between the hard covers there lies much sense and wisdom. Most of the major headache syndromes are covered and descriptions adequate for diagnostic purposes are provided. The advice about how to treat the patient is usually both detailed and explicit. It is easy to understand its popularity with general practitioners as a didactic text.

For the more critical there are areas where complex cocktails of drugs recommended will not find ready acceptance. The simplification of pathophysiology and the approaches to management would not be agreed in many neurological circles. Much attention is paid to "the somatization process," to biofeedback, relaxation training, aerobic conditioning and (no surprise) acupuncture is not forgotten. It may be that the British are too cautious, too conservative in our attempts to tackle what is often an intractable tangle of pain, invalidity and complex emotional and personality conflicts. The approach in this book is one of empiricism, backed one suspects by the sort of compelling urge to treat which patients of this type find irresistible.

The results are best judged by the preface "The reader may be assured that we and our colleagues have successfully treated many patients with headache. This is a book founded on clinical experience, for which there is no substitute."

JMS PEARCE

Manual of Nerve Conduction Velocity and Somatosensory Evoked Potentials. 2nd ed. By Joel A DeLisa, Keith Mackenzie, Ernest M Baran. (Pp 210; \$25.50.) New York: Raven Press, 1986.

The second edition of this manual of test-

Book reviews

niques for nerve conduction measurement, written by three American specialists in rehabilitation medicine, has been expanded to include techniques for somatosensory evoked potential recording. It is aimed at physicians who perform electrodiagnostic tests and at practising electromyographers.

The ringbound book is laid out in small sections, each of which describes for a particular nerve, electrode placements for stimulation and recording, amplifier settings and normal values. Each section is in fact an abstract from an original investigation, the reference to which is given. The authors are obsessive about temperature control and one of the initial sections of the book deals with the effects of temperature on nerve conduction measurements; equations are given which allow correction of measured values to a standard temperature. In their preface the authors state that they "present studies that use standardised distance and document skin temperature". However, in many of the techniques described, the original authors did not control temperature rigidly. The normal values quoted are therefore more appropriately used without recourse to a temperature correction.

The section on somatosensory evoked potentials contains general guidelines about scalp recording and stimulation of peripheral nerves, and in contrast to the initial sections, some comments on the clinical application of the various tests. Although these comments in general are useful and accurate, the suggestion that SEPs could be used to investigate peripheral nerve entrapment syndromes would surprise many neurologists and neurophysiologists.

Although the book will be of use as a reference source for uncommon nerve conduction studies and normal values, many neurophysiologists will prefer to consult the original articles. The remainder of the book may have a place for neurophysiologists in training, but there are more authoritative works for this purpose.

KR MILLS

Manter & Gatz's Essentials of Clinical Neuroanatomy and Neurophysiology 7th ed. (Essentials of Medical Education Series). Edited by Sid Gilman, Sarah Winans Newman. (Pp 256; \$16.95.) Philadelphia: FA Davis. UK Distributors: Beckenham: Quest-Meridien, 1986.

This book gives a short account of the struc-

ture and function of the nervous system and in the preface the authors indicate that it is aimed at the "beginning student" wanting a brief overview of neuroanatomy and neurophysiology or the advanced student wishing to review the topic. The fact that it has gone to seven editions suggests that it fulfills these aims and has found an appropriate audience, and in my assessment of it I have particularly born in mind its potential audience. Two summers ago I spent a few months looking in detail at all the neuroanatomy and neurophysiology books available in an attempt to find a suitable text book that we could recommend to our undergraduate students. There are many such books, some large and some small, and I concluded then that an earlier edition of this book did not fulfil our needs. How then does the current edition rate and for whom is it suitable?

It begins with a traditional review of the anatomy and physiology of neurons and then follows with separate chapters on all the main components of the nervous system. Some of these, such as the section on the brain stem and cranial nerves, are very detailed and this seems to be the rule in many similar books. How many of us, as undergraduates, remember the chore of trying to learn brain stem sections yet none, I suspect, still remember the details. What we all needed as students, and indeed need now, is the equivalent of an idiot's guide to the brain stem rather than a detailed description as given here. On the other hand other sections of this book are rather brief. In common with many of its competitors this book has only a short section on the cerebral cortex and the description of the control of speech and language can only be described as sketchy. Other topics such as the reticular formation and the control of consciousness, and the control of eye movements, are similarly covered only very briefly. I could find virtually nothing on the important topic of the metabolism of neurons which is a serious omission though one shared by many similar books.

The best chapter is called chemical neuroanatomy and covers a topic often poorly dealt with in other text books. In it are described the main neurotransmitters, their major localisation in the nervous system, and a description of their physiological significance. This is an excellent review of a difficult topic and could be read with interest by both undergraduate and postgraduate. The illustrations are particularly good. Unfortunately, the following chapter on cerebrospinal fluid is less good and this could have been considerably improved by the inclusion of more line diagrams to illus-

trate, for example, the different types of hydrocephalus. The final chapter is on "neurologic diagnostic tests" and provides a review of the laboratory tests available for the investigation of the nervous system. In a book concerning the essentials of clinical neuroanatomy and neurophysiology this seemed to me to be totally unnecessary.

Overall the book is nicely presented, the line diagrams are clear, and it is easy to handle and of good quality paper. Whilst the contents list is detailed the index is very poor; obvious omissions are coma, memory, and cerebral dominance. In common with many small books attempting to summarise neuroanatomy and neuro-physiology this book has an uneven content and insufficient detail on some topics to make it suitable for recommendation to undergraduates as a primary text, and to be fair the authors do not claim this. I think it would be a useful book for a physician to have as a review of the nervous system and it certainly could be read with benefit by postgraduate students working for the membership of either the College of Physicians or College of Psychiatrists.

NEF CARTLIDGE

The Clinical Process in Psychiatry. By Barry Nurcombe, Rollin M Gallagher. (Pp 774; \$69.50 H/bk; \$29.95 P/bk.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

There are those who argue that the art of psychiatry, the mesh and woof of clinical practice, cannot be taught but can only be learned, osmotically as it were, through repeated exposure to as wide a variety of clinical situations and challenges as possible. There are others who, despairing of the soft, intuitive, inconsistent quality of much psychiatric practice, insist that the whole process of diagnosis should be handed over to appropriately programmed computers.

The authors of this substantial text are well aware of this dilemma and indeed their justification for publishing their book (and these days massive tomes certainly demand justification) is that it will actually help students and practitioners to think. It starts with a somewhat abbreviated survey of biological and social functioning, proceeds with a review of the strategy and the tactics underpinning clinical reasoning, summarises the knowledge and the procedures required in routine clinical practice, describes how the general principles outlined can be applied to different clinical settings and con-