Book reviews

taken. A useful table explains what further trials are underway.

Thus the general emphasis throughout the book is one of encouragement and support with a general air of optimism, and I think this is the book's greatest value. Thus with a slight criticism of its perhaps being beyond the comprehension of many sufferers in the United Kingdom, it can be recommended certainly to those responsible for the ongoing care of those with multiple sclerosis.

JB FOSTER

Pharmacology of Cerebral Ischemia. Edited by J Kriegstein. (Pp 450; \$111.00.) Amsterdam: Elsevier Science Publishers, 1987.

This book on the pharmacology of cerebral ischaemia is a report of the proceedings of an international symposium held in the middle of 1986. It has therefore been published very rapidly and as such will be a reference book of interest to researchers in the field as the participants represented the main areas of scientific advance in the study of this subject. The book is interestingly produced in that there is a short initial section entitled *Pathophysiology*, which serves as a basic introduction to the main concepts which are treated in two further main sections entitled *Methods* and *Pharmacology and Therapy*, which represent overviews of research programmes and practical approaches to solving some of the problems posed in cerebral ischaemia. The final section entitled *Poster Sessions* represents a series of extended abstracts describing work in progress.

The speed of publication has meant that there have had to be compromises in editing. The book is produced in the well known camera ready format and clearly there is therefore little control over the standard of English, spelling and typographical errors. Though irritating, these do not detract from the messages of the book.

A certain degree of knowledge of the field will be required to read it critically and it is hardly suitable for the tyro. The referencing, particularly in the review chapters, is disappointingly partisan. Siejso's book *Brain Energy Metabolism* with its chapters on cerebral ischaemia is a much better introduction but the references are out of date. I think the book would be a useful addition to the library of laboratories in the field and for reference in specialised neuroscience institutes.

R FRACKOWIAK

Stroke: A Clinical Approach. By Louis R Caplan and Robert W Stein. (Pp 343; £40.000.) Guildford: Butterworth Scientific Ltd, 1986.

The anomaly of stroke management in most British institutions is that patients are looked after by non-neurologists; the same is true in some other countries. This book is intended for those doctors who have to care for stroke patients. It is not intended for the expert on cerebrovascular disease.

The whole topic is well covered by two neurologists with a wide clinical experience of the subject. They provide a very down-to-earth, sensible approach without any important idiosyncrasies. By reading this work, the tyro will glean considerable knowledge and wisdom about stroke illness; for example when discussing the place of cardiac investigations, they say that "the question is not whether to look at the heart, but how thoroughly". The text is punctuated in places by case reports, most of them very helpful and relevant, but a few were not. Their CT scans and PET scans are drawings rather than photographs, presumably to cut costs. This may irritate some readers.

The section on rehabilitation is rather short, which is consistent with the interest in the subject among most physicians! They rightly discuss the emotional danger of an exaggerated emphasis on physical therapy where patients are encouraged to strive for the return of normal function when it would be more appropriate to adapt to their deficit.

The references are well chosen, up-to-date and readily accessible. This will prove to be most useful to the non-specialist.

DJ THOMAS

Cerebral Lateralization: Biological Mechanisms, Associations and Pathology. By Norman Geschwind and Albert M Galaburda. (Pp 304; £29.95.) London: MIT Press, 1986.

Despite its cumbersome title this book is both readable and enjoyable. For the reader without specialised knowledge, the ideas are presented clearly and vigorously and the most controversial interpretations seem to be models of logic. One can easily settle back and read through this book consecutively, buoyed up by Geschwind's enthusiasm.

One may too readily accept conventional practices and beliefs, particularly in the par-

tially charted field of behavioural psychology; right-handedness for writing has been equated with left hemisphere dominance. Geschwind, with his meticulous nature and his precisely recorded examination of the nervous system showed that accepted beliefs were too simplistic and tended to defeat any progress in our understanding of higher cerebral function and lateralisation. Having discarded unproven assumptions he showed that one hemisphere had a major role for some activities, while the other hemisphere was of preeminence for different functions. Dominance became a discredited term.

Geschwind had a magpie-like acquisitiveness for esoteric detail and these are woven into the texture of his book. Equally there are generous tributes to the assistance given by his friends and colleagues. Thirty years ago Geschwind drew attention to the asymmetry of the structure of the two hemispheres and here he discusses the various factors, genetic, hormonal and chemical which may influence this development. He then relates anomalies of the normal asymmetric development of the brain to various disorders of cerebral functions such as dyslexia. He associates left-handedness with certain immune disorders and predisposition to particular illnesses in later life. Furthermore, left-handedness which is generally regarded as a disability is shown to be associated with certain artistic and sporting talents.

This book is the work of an enthusiast; it glows with his infectious, headlong excitement, it bristles with provocative suggestions and is occasionally betrayed by its impetuosity.

It is a tribute to Dr Galaburda that two distinct hands are not easily identifiable in the presentation of this material.

IT DRAPER

Degenerative Neurological Disease in the Elderly. Edited by RA Griffiths and ST McCarthy. (Pp 206; £27.50) Bristol: Wright, 1987.

This is an account of the proceedings of a conference held in 1985 and encompasses the contribution of 29 authors in 21 chapters within 199 pages—a veritable model of succinctness for which the editors must be congratulated. Despite these constraints the diversity of topics is extraordinarily wide, embracing epidemiology, genetics, neurochemistry, neuropathology, and molecular biology and hierarchically ascends from the peripheral provinces of neuromuscular dis-

ease through the neuropathies culminating in matters metaphysical. An intriguing chapter on dementia and religion includes spiritual references from St John Climacus as well as from the Corinthians and St Luke; to a visiting Martian, this might give the misleading impression that dementia is restricted to readers of the New Testament. While a text of this kind can provide no more than a superficial appraisal of a refractory group of maladies, the text is concise and convenient for those who would wish to enjoy a summary of current interests in this area of gerontology and geriatric medicine.

GERALD STERN

Molecular Biology in Basic and Clinical Neuroscience Research. Edited by Jean de Vellis, Jean Lauder, Jacques Mallet, Alain Privat, Jose Regino Perez-Pelo. (Pp 352; £56.00.) New York: Alan R Liss. UK Distrib: John Wiley & Sons, 1986.

The book is divided into four sections which cover neurotransmitters and neuromodulators, aspects of neuronal function and development, glial function and clinical applications. It has been presented by the editors as an introduction to the application of recombinant DNA technology to neurology. There have been several remarkable advances to date which have shown the effectiveness of such an approach, as for example, in Huntingdon's chorea. These advances have been founded on basic studies such as those exemplified in the book, which is a collection of selected articles, mostly from the USA. These articles by various contributors provide some insight into the way in which fundamental problems are approached by basic scientists. Invariably in such an approach there will be different levels of success and rates of progress reported, leading to variable quality. Generally, no new information is presented that cannot be garnered from the specialist literature. Rather the articles represent research reports, albeit of a specialised nature, in which topics of molecular biological interest are presented somewhat to the exclusion of other more cellular studies. This selectivity may result from efforts to present a concise, molecular biological viewpoint.

Since this book is designed to appeal to clinicians as well as basic scientists, there are several chapters of direct interest to clinicians in the last section. This includes a descriptive analysis of the use of DNA probes and also presents techniques for

obtaining RNA in a viable form from human material. However, the reader would gain more from reading the earlier sections which contain information primarily on structural analysis of genes coding for specific brain elements, as for example in the chapters describing a human myelin basic protein variant and the relationship between tyrosine hydroxylase and homologous sequences. A wide variety of macromolecules are covered ranging from receptors to neuron-specific enzymes. Other chapters include the functional and developmental aspects of these macromolecules as well as the neuronal expression of the proto-oncogenes c-src, which is possibly involved in differentiation processes.

The book is perhaps too specialised and detailed to be viewed as an appropriate introduction for clinicians without prior exposure to molecular biology. It assumes that the reader is at least cognisant of the terminology and concepts. Those in the field will find this book a valuable source of information on developments and clinicians may also appreciate the chapters of more immediate relevance to their specialty. To satisfy basic and clinical researchers is not an easy task and a middle path has to be found which ensures the retention of interest of both parties. This is a useful book to have but one of its drawbacks is that there is considerable redundancy, particularly with regard to strategy. The book should be regarded more as a collection of related articles than as a text in which the contributors present a review of their research interests. It would have been helpful to have included a more extensive overview which also addressed the future direction of the application of molecular techniques.

PAUL SMITH AND CHRISTINE HALL

The XVth Epilepsy International Symposium. (Advances in Epileptology, Vol 10.) Edited by Peter Wolf, Mogens Dam, Dieter Janz, FR Dreifuss. (Pp 650; \$199.50.) New York: Raven Press, 1987.

A selection of 163 papers out of more than 500 that were presented at the 16th International Epilepsy Congress held in 1985 are contained in this book. However, it is more than a simple collection of separate articles, and the editors are to be congratulated on their organisation of the text. The book is divided into 14 sections that deal with different aspects of epilepsy. These include neuropathology, the electrophysiology of seiz-

ures, diagnostic techniques, surgical treatment, anticonvulsant therapy, genetics, psychiatry, self help groups, and neuro-rhymicity.

Much previously unpublished work is included. Several studies are reported on controversial topics such as anticonvulsant drug withdrawal. This allows the reader to readily compare the different approaches to the same problem, and make his own assessment of their merits. However, there is no editorial comment or reference to the discussions held at the meeting.

The book provides an overview of current progress and research techniques in this broad field, but does not aim to give comprehensive reviews. People working in epilepsy, whatever their particular interest, should find it helpful. Access to it would be particularly important for those involved in research.

Essential Neurology: A Concise Textbook. 3rd edition. By William Pryse-Phillips, TJ Murray. (Pp 721; \$37.00) New York: Elsevier Science Publishing Co Inc. 1987.

This text now into its third edition has clearly been popular with medical students for many years. Would I recommend it as essential reading material for the busy undergraduate of today? I am afraid I would not and the reason would be very largely that I consider 700+ pages far too long to be considered as essential reading for a subject to which most medical schools devote only two or three weeks.

The book is divided into four sections, the first two dealing with neurological assessment, examination and localisation and the last two sections devoted to clinical neurology. Section one is devoted to neurological history and examination. It is clearly laid out and supplemented extensively with photographs. The neurological assessment and examination of children and neonates is deliberately brief. This is entirely reasonable as the neurological examination of children, neonates and developmentally delayed is an art of its own and one I suggest most adult neurologists have not acquired. Section two summarises the major symptoms and signs produced by pathology in the nervous system. This is well done and never confuses the reader with too detailed neuroanatomy. The last two sections deal with clinical neurology. The first of these

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