Book reviews

interest to clinical neurologists as well as those managing infectious diseases, virologists and also neurosurgeons and psychiatrists. The book is well produced, reasonably priced, well referenced and stimulating. It should be on the shelves of all good neurological libraries.

PGE KENNEDY

Handbook of Clinical Psychoneuroendocrinology Edited by Charles B Nemeroff & Peter T Loosen. (Pp 502; £50.00.) Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 1987.

This is a valuable reference handbook of clinical psychoneuroendocrinology. The large and rapidly growing subject is reviewed in 24 chapters. Between them they cover most of the principle findings in the field together with about 5000 key references.

Although the coverage is in general comprehensive many of the sections are lacking in critical perspective and, in general, studies are quoted together with an automatic acceptance of the authors' conclusions. The subject is now at a stage where the reader may be justified in accepting 50% of the data that are published but he should hesitate if he finds that he is accepting more than 10% of the conclusions. With this proviso the book will provide a useful introduction to the subject.

S CHECKLEY

Computing for Clinicians. By Tim Chard. (Pp 136; £18.00.) Bristol: IOP Publishing, 1988.

As the author makes clear at the outset, computers are increasingly in evidence in medicine and it is now becoming difficult to ignore them. Unfortunately, they are surrounded by a lot of obscure jargon which puts many people off learning to use one or finding out more about computing in general. In fact, as computers and particularly modern software packages have become more sophisticated and "user friendly", it has become quite unnecessary to be bothered with almost all technical matters in order to be able to use even a very powerful computer and it is refreshing to see this point made in the first few pages of the book. It is much more useful to be aware of what computers can do and the author provides this information in a concise and readable way. There is helpful information about the various types of computer system which explains what sort

of computer will perform a particular task and what sort of software will be needed. The various types of software packages are fully explained. There are also useful explanations of computing terms which will be of use to those seeking to evaluate the various technical specifications provided by the manufacturers of different machines.

Subsequent chapters cover computerised record systems, other aspects of administration including a clear account of the varieties and uses of databases; computerised diagnostic equipment; the crucial subject of transferring data into a computer and in what form; computerised diagnostic systems and the controversy surrounding their use; the use of computers in treatment and finally programs to assist in teaching and literature searches.

In the areas of diagnosis and treatment it is never suggested that computers should or could replace the human brain as in some respects they are not well suited to these tasks. However, examples of uses in these areas are presented as food for thought such as spotting rare but important drug interactions, the identification of rare syndromes or the choice of the most appropriate chemotherapy regimen according to a protocol previously fed into a computer's memory.

Some of the information, particularly the rather technical section on the computerisation of diagnostic recording equipment, is of little general interest but the author has mostly avoided this type of approach to the subject.

There has been a real need for a book like this which provides a good introduction to medical aspects of computing and is probably more than most of us will ever need to know. It summarises all that is needed to give confidence to anyone approaching computers for the first time. The book will be especially useful to anyone new to computers embarking on a research project where computerised data processing is required. Regrettably £18 seems a lot for this small paperback and will probably discourage some from buying it.

NA FLETCHER

Contributions to Contemporary Neurology: A tribute to Joseph Michael Foley. Edited by Robert B Daroff, John P Conomy. (Pp 259; £49.95.) Guildford: Butterworth Scientific, 1988.

American neurologists are well recognised to be generous to their retiring and retired senior colleagues. Recently at the annual

meeting of the American Neurological Association, a spoken tribute was paid to Joe Foley and concurrently Butterworths have published "Contributions to Contemporary Neurology", a tribute to Joseph Michael Foley.

Forty-one authors have contributed to this beautifully produced and reasonably priced collection of essays. As one would expect, the majority of the contributing authors are practising in North America or Canada with the exception of Dr Simoncini and Dr Stuhmer from the Max Planck Institute in the GFR and Michael Swash from the London Hospital. The essays were collected following a meeting held in March 1986 in Cleveland to honour Dr Foley. It was then his seventieth birthday and the papers delivered at that symposium now comprise this volume of dedication.

Reading the account of Foley's neurological life one senses the warm affection felt for this eminent American neurologist, a place of eminence justified and endorsed by his Curriculum Vitae presented as a coda to this collection of essays.

The authors combine to produce twenty essays and I feel it would perhaps be invidious to select particular contributions for a special comment. Areas of considerable interest, exciting areas of research development and standard essays on many aspects of neurological disease comprise the collection. Understandably Richard Johnson writes on acquired immunodeficiency. The advent of PET scanning is recognised. Who better than Betty Banker to write on dermatomyositis and the polymyositis syndromes and Monroe Cole on aspects of rehabilitation? The essays are all short but comprehensive as one would expect from their provenance. I feel the volume deserves to be well read. The standard of the printing is exceptional, the editing accurate and this collection of essays fulfills its purpose in honouring Dr Foley.

JB FOSTER

Myasthenia Gravis. Monographs in Allergy Vol 25. Edited by M H De Baets, H J G H Oosterhuis, K V Toyka. (Pp 160; £57.30.) Basel: Karger, 1988.

This slim volume represents the proceedings of the First European Conference on Myasthenia Gravis held in June 1987. The book contains contributions from several distinguished researchers in myasthenia, the majority concentrating on current immunological work in the disease rather than clin-