Contemporary Issues in Neurological Surgery: Surgery for Skull Base Tumors. Edited by DM LONG. (Pp 271; Price: £49.50). 1992. Oxford, Blackwell Scientific Publications Ltd. ISBN 0-86542-090-4.

This is a straightforward, well written introduction to skull base surgery suitable for junior residents in neurosurgery and perhaps neurologists seeking an overview of this subject. It is well referenced but is not sufficient for the Intercollegiate Board exam. There is overlap between chapters both for neuroradiology and for sub-frontal/anterior visual pathway meningiomas. The chapters on pituitary, interventional radiology, cavernous sinus pathway and acoustic schwannoma are superficial, didactic introductions. I found no introduction to the ethical problems created by some of the more adventurous procedures for the more malignant lesions. There is no mention of Uttley's use of the transclival approach to mid-basilar aneurysms.

In summary, the Johns Hopkins Center for skull base surgery have produced an easy-to-read introduction to the subject but not one that really satisfies.

JD PICKARD

Handbook of Head Trauma: Acute Care to Recovery. (Series: Critical Issues in Neuropsychology). Edited by C L LONG and L K ROSS. (Pp 442; Price: \$75.00). New York, Plenum Publishing Corp. 1992. ISBN 0-306-43947-6.

This book is well produced and comprehensively referenced. Nearly forty authors contribute to the twenty-four chapters dealing with psychological issues that arise in the management of head injured patients from the acute stage, to social security disability, long after discharge. This is a book by psychologists for psychologists and I do not think it will appeal to the generality of British Neurologists who may consider themselves fortunate to secure the interest of a psychologist for even a brief phase of their head injured patients management.

Inevitably this book's structure leads to repetition, and many chapters rehearse the general statistics of head injury. On the other hand, those who have a special interest in this area will find source references discussed in detail together with several treatment protocols and their outcomes. On the whole the scope for psychological intervention and its outcome are considered dispassionately. Some contributions tend to be wordy—there has to be a shorter way of expressing "psycho-pharmacological interventions maybe useful to optimise attentional function" but that should not obscure the wealth of information here compiled.

PAUL MILLAC

From Neuron to Brain. 3rd Edition. (International Student Edition). By J G NICHOLLS J G MARTIN and B G WALLACE. (Pp 807; Illus. Price £20.95 (Paper), £37.95 (Board)). 1992. Mass. USA, Sinauer Assoc Inc. UK Distrib: Oxford, WH Freeman & Co. Ltd. ISBN 0-87893-586-X.

Can one, should one, criticise a book which is now in its 3rd edition and sells by the thousands to keep young students of the nervous system?

It costs only one fifth the price of most books reviewed in these columns and yet contains more clearly presented information and generates far more understanding. I once asked a publisher how he judged a good book; one of the best is "From Neuron to Brain", he told me, "I wish my company had something like that". The type, the layout, the figures, headings, the paper, binding, the clever use of a single colour (blue) and the use of boxes in the text to explain points which might otherwise interrupt the flow of text all had his admiration—and mine too.

Students of mature years, like me, began neuroscience studies with Hodgkin and Huxley. Now it begins with ion channels, their conductivity and molecular arrangement in the membrane. The authors have a firm understanding of their readers' capabilities; difficult concepts are clearly explained and descriptions of methods are given where they aid understanding. Boxes are used sparingly but effectively. Most neurophysiology books will tell you about second messages in synaptic transmission and mention cyclic AMP, knowledge of which is assumed. These authors kindly supply a box which gives the essential biochemistry of cyclic AMP, how it was discovered and something of its wider role. Boxes are easy to identify and read separately so that the flow of the main text is maintained.

Everything then flows beautifully and is highly recommended. Everything to do with molecular and cellular function is as near perfect as a textbook can ever be. But neurons form nervous systems and the last 200 pages deal with systems. From here on the keen student is going to look forward to learning about some fascinating aspects of brain function such as consciousness, balance, memory, arousal and attention, but he will be sadly disappointed for none of the above appear in the index. Subjects such as pain, perception and sleep get short, inadequate and misleading treatment. There is a bold attempt to build from neuron discharges in the visual system to visual perception. It shows that one can go quite a long way recording single neurons but not all the way. A more distant perspective is required. We have gained in knowledge but lost in eloquence—a 'columnar interblob region in Vi' doesn't sound a very nice place—an enchanted loom would be more exciting.

The final chapter on perspectives mentions minimal neurology; Phineas Gage, Broca and a few other names are there. Three MRI scans are included but the EEG is dismissed as of little use as it cannot detect the fine grain of neuronal activity. Whither sleep research without it? Who would have thought that nearly 30 years after the discovery of the association of dopamine loss and Parkinsons disease that a major textbook would devote only two pages to basal ganglia function?

Our student need not despair. There are many other better books on the nervous system but probably none better on cellular neurology. Dear Authors, do not think too unkindly of the reviewer. Retitle your book 'From Natrium to Neuron', leave out the last 200 pages and it will remain a winner.

EM SEDGWICK

Cerebral Blood Flow and Metabolism. By LARS EDVINSSON, ERIC T MACKENZIE AND JAMES MCCULLOCH. (Pp 683; Price \$162.50). 1992. New York, Raven Press. ISBN 0-88167-918-6.

A plethora of publications on the cerebral circulation has appeared over the last two decades. All have been reports of conferences and symposia, hence have been patchy in their coverage, reflecting the interests of the participants rather than the needs of the subject. Indeed, since the excellent monograph by M.J.Purves, published in 1972, there has been no systematic treatment of the subject. This defect has now been remedied in a very satisfactory manner by the present publication which reflects the stimulating Scots-Scandinavian partnership which has grown up over the years.

There is first a clear presentation of the anatomy of the cerebral circulation, a knowledge of which is essential for an understanding of function. This is followed by a section on the physiology of the cerebral circulation after which comes a long section on pharmacology. This latter shows the greatest change since Purves wrote twenty years ago with the identification of an increasing number of neurotransmitters and determination of their function. Against this background the way in which the cerebral circulation responds to demands upon it is clearly described.

Although the book is basically concerned with physiology and pharmacology, there is a useful final section of 62 pages on the more common disorders affecting the cerebral circulation, including ischaemia, migraine, subarachnoid haemorrhage and ageing. Each chapter has abundant references and clear diagrams and illustrations and there is a good index. This will be an essential reference book for anyone working on the cerebral circulation and cerebrovascular disease.

JOHN MARSHALL

Challenges in Neurology. By VLADIMIR C HACHINSKI. (Pp 294; Price: £62.00). 1992. Philadelphia, F A Davis & Co. ISBN 0-8036-4504-X.

Readers of the *Archives of Neurology* will be familiar with the series of "Controversies" edited by Vladimir Hachinski, which have debated a wide range of neurological topics. Dr Hachinski has brought together an excellent selection of "Challenges in Neurology" in this new compilation. Allowing authors greater scope than in *Archives* the topics chosen are very ably discussed, and each chapter or section is preceded by a pithy but cogent comment from Dr Hachinski.

This volume is very much aimed at the practising neurologist and commences with excellent discussions of diagnostic and management approaches to the dizzy patient, who still cause physicians to "experience a slight decline in spirits" as Bryan Matthews so aptly described. This is followed by a discussion of patients with whiplash injuries who are being seen with increasingly frequency, and because of the frequent medicolegal implications often pose a particularly difficult group to treat.