Book Reviews


The author of this short text rightly feels that the epileptic needs all the assistance that an enlightened society can offer. He does not content himself with advice on drugs, but writes of the problems of education, marriage, pregnancy, and employment which arise, reminding us that 40% of patients need assistance in finding jobs. Dr. Pryse-Phillips has not tried to write a scholarly monograph, but, although the clinical aspect is well summarized, he might have devoted more than three pages to the chapter entitled Neurophysiology. The role of trauma, the chemistry of epilepsy, and the way anticonvulsants are thought to work are topics which would enrich the text. Dr. Bayliss presents a readable account of the use and limitations of electroencephalography, but he too might have said more, for example, of the prognostic value of electroencephalography in epilepsy. Treatment is well described but it is not stated by what route sodium phenytoin and diazepam should be given in status epilepticus. One has the feeling that the author wished to get his thoughts on epilepsy straight and that the exercise would assist others. It probably will fulfil this modest function. Any young doctor who works in an epilepsy clinic would find this book helpful.

J. D. Spillane


This is an interesting book on an important subject. Most of us, when faced with a patient who has had his first fit, especially if he is young, will certainly want to know if there is any precipitating or causative factor and we may carry Hughlings Jackson's adjuration to consider 'where is the lesion?' in the back of our minds, but we will be concerned almost at once with prognosis—whether fits are going to continue, how they will respond to treatment, and how they may affect intelligence, behaviour, and future education and employment. These are the sort of questions that are considered in this book. In the first part the author reviews the literature on prognosis in epilepsy in general and in a number of special groups such as petit mal, febrile convulsion, and traumatic epilepsy; and considers what has been said about intelligence and mortality in epilepsy. This section contains much information and some useful critical reassessment of older views. In the second part the author calls on his own experience and the material of the Michigan Epilepsy Center and Lafayette Clinic to answer similar questions about prognosis. Here again a large amount of valuable and detailed information is available but it is rather less readily accessible than in the first section. In a final chapter of conclusions we are given an excellent résumé of modern views on the aetiology and pathophysiology of epilepsy... the main problem in epilepsy is not only the epileptogenic focus... but the abnormal spread (of the discharge)... Those factors which allow for spread are in all probability related to the seizures propensity of the individual. This may sound obvious but it is constantly forgotten in the concentration on the focus, both in treatment and research. The book can be recommended to all those concerned with the management of epilepsy. It contributes facts and thought to an important practical problem which has too often been a subject for misquoted obiter dicta.

C. W. M. Whitty


This small book, one of a series of practical handbooks on child psychiatry, is an excellent account by a senior French clinician of the nature and treatment of epilepsy in children. The classification is rational, and the description of seizure patterns is clear, enabling the reader to class the cases in categories described. Biochemical and other factors predisposing to seizures or concerned with their precipitation are discussed. Treatment and management are orthodox.

The second part of the book is addressed mainly to magistrates, teachers, and social workers. It contains useful chapters on the doctor-patient relationship, problems of family, school, leisure, choice of work, driving, and marriage. It ends with some advice on helping the child to accept his disability. The good bibliography is international, but naturally greatly influenced by the outstanding contributions to epilepsy of French workers.

J. A. Simpson


This is an account of cerebrovascular disease in the Israeli population over a five-year period, sponsored by a U.S. Government grant. Rehabilitation and psycho-social aspects receive particular attention and the influence of factors such as race, sex, site of initial lesion, aphasia, blood pressure, and diabetes in the degree of recovery are carefully analysed. This and the epidemiological section of the book are timely and valuable additions to the literature on cerebrovascular disease and are to be recommended, particularly since the survey, which includes all but the most minor forms of cerebrovascular disease, is more representative than many previous reports. The clinical section adds little to existing knowledge. The various chapters by different authors have been