Book reviews

THE WERNICKE-KORSAKOFF SYNDROME By Maurice Victor, Raymond D. Adams, and George H. Collins. (Pp. 206; illus.; £4.00.) Blackwell Scientific Publications: Oxford. 1971.

This latest addition to the series on contemporary neurology is a classic of its kind and can already be recognized as the definitive work on the Wernicke-Korsakoff syndrome. It is an example of what can still be learned by the traditional methods of clinico-pathological correlation. The authors, who are distinguished both as clinicians and pathologists, have studied over 20 years 250 cases of this rare but important syndrome and not only bring together previous work but add much original material on pathology and on prognosis. A number of older observations are subjected to careful analysis and found to be correct. It is confirmed that the disease occurs almost exclusively in alcoholics with dietary deficiency and can be recognized confidently on a clinical basis by a combination of ocular palsy, nystagmus, ataxia, and mental change. The ocular palsies respond well to thiamine, while mental change and polyneuropathy (present in 80% of cases) respond poorly. The early mental changes are found to consist of confusion and delirium rather than the classical Korsakoff psychosis and in severe cases a chronic non-confabulatory amnesia is found to persist indefinitely.

On the pathological side the essential lesions are found to be vacuolization and destruction of cerebral parenchyma with destruction of myelinated fibres rather than of neurones. Gliotic and vascular changes are of secondary importance. The curious distribution of the lesion in the paraventricular area of the diencephalon and brain-stem are found to be unrelated to cell type, blood supply, or embryonic origin. The authors consider that the changes are consistent with a metabolic disorder secondary to enzyme deficiency. The ocular and vestibular features, which are particularly well described both clinically and pathologically, are found to correspond to a lesion of the 3rd and 6th nerve nuclei, the adjacent tegmentum, and the vestibular nuclei. No significant cell loss is found in these areas, thus explaining the rapid recovery. The lesions in the mammillary bodies are found to correlate poorly with amnesia, which is related more closely to changes in the medial dorsal nuclei of the diencephalon.

The presentation is clear and simple, the illustrations of high quality. Altogether this is a remarkable work of medical scholarship; for the reader it is a source of stimulus and information, and for the authors a source of lasting renown.

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A NEUROPSYCHIATRIC STUDY IN CHILDHOOD Clinics in Developmental Medicine 35/36 By Michael Rutter, Philip Graham, and William Yule. (Pp. 271; £3.75.) Spastics International Medical Publications: London. Heinemann Medical Books: London. J. B. Lippincott: Philadelphia.

Among the avalanche of clinical research which descends relentlessly upon us, it is only very occasionally that we encounter an endeavour which is clearly destined to be a landmark. Such is the 'Isle of Wight project' of which the present volume is a companion to *Education, Health and Behaviour*, edited by Tizard and Whitmore, and published in 1970. Rutter and his colleagues are to be congratulated on this elegant epidemiological contribution to clinical child psychiatry and neurology. Four main questions are posed: (1) Is the rate of psychiatric disorder increased in children with organic brain dysfunction? (2) If it is increased, is the high rate of psychiatric disorder due to the presence of physical handicap, or to the presence of a disorder specifically of the brain? (3) Is there a specific type of psychiatric disorder which is associated with organic brain dysfunction? (4) As not all children with disorders of the brain have psychiatric abnormality, what features of the child, his brain disorder, or his environment determine the development of emotional or behavioural problems?

The project involved an initial screening of the entire school-age population of the island from which were extracted all children likely to be affected, who were then subjected to intensive investigation by a team of physicians, psychologists, and social scientists.

The report is in four parts. The first is a comprehensive review of the literature. The second describes the procedures and findings of neurological assessment. The third deals with the epidemiology of neuroepileptic disorders of childhood, and the fourth with the psychiatric aspects of these same disorders.

To satisfy the rigours of the study, standardized procedures for neurological examination and psychiatric interview were devised, and tested where possible for validity and reliability. The methodological aspects themselves justify careful study by any researcher embarking on related projects.

The main finding is unequivocal—namely, that psychiatric disorders are commoner in children with organic brain dysfunction. Moreover, this is shown *not* to be due to related physical handicap. It seems likely that no specific psychiatric disorder results. The fourth question, regarding why precisely such children are psychiatrically disturbed, remains