biology students, (2) medical students, and (3) advanced students requiring a 'quick refresher'.

The educational value to the student of constructing his own charts is undoubted. It is less certain whether those drawn by another artist are so useful. However, the book is cheap, attractive, easily handled, and a welcome attempt to simplify a difficult area of anatomical study. J. A. SIMPSON

SPASTICITY—A TOPICAL SURVEY Edited by W. Birkmayer. (Pp. 218; illustrated; $12·50.) Huber: Berne. 1972.

This book results from an international symposium in April 1971, sponsored by a drug company, presumably with the object of bringing together and publicizing the various and multiple assessments on the utility of one of their anti-spastic drugs.

However, the early chapters of this book are of more general interest. Their authors review the physiological and pathophysiological aspects of skeletal muscle tone, the regulation and function of the muscle spindle, the causes and clinical significance of spasticity, the pharmacological aspects of the supraspinal control of muscle tone, and the pharmacological differentiation of muscle relaxants. Two chapters deal with some aspects of the measurement or assessment of spasticity, and two chapters describe the synthesis of the anti-spastic drug, its metabolism, and pharmacokinetics.

The majority of the book is devoted to clinical trials, often with attempts at objective measurement. While some of these accounts tend to be eulogies, the only paper to measure the drug's action on H-reflex excitability concluded that the drug was inactive in 40% of the patients tested by this method, and there was a rapid decrease in effectiveness in other patients.

This book will be of interest to all those concerned with the treatment of spastic patients, but it is hardly likely to be more than a transient reference book. GEOFFREY RUSHWORTH

PSYCHIATRIC COMPLICATIONS OF MEDICAL DRUGS Edited by Richard I. Shader. (Pp. 339; $14·50.) Raven Press: New York. 1972.

The taking of a drug history is today almost as incumbent upon one as is the compiling of the traditional clinical record. The time is therefore ripe for the production of an authoritative publication on psychiatric complications of drug therapy, but unfortunately this book cannot be recommended. There are chapters on digitalis, cortisol, reserpine, belladonna alkaloids and related compounds, L-dopa, amphetamine, antituberculous drugs, androgens and oestrogens, progesterone and oral contraceptives, placebos, one of marginal interest on hormones and behaviour, and a totally irrelevant section on the use of vitamins in psychiatry. Polypharmacy and drug interaction are mentioned in the introduction but not in detail thereafter. It seems strange that amidst the sounding of warnings a study reporting administration of amphetamine hourly until a psychosis was produced finds a place. The scope of this book is very limited and I would recommend instead a recent article in the *Practitioner*. J. A. G. WATT

GENETIC STUDIES IN MENTAL SUBNORMALITY Part I. Familial idiopathic severe subnormality: the question of a contribution by X-linked genes By B. C. Clare Davison. Part II. The application of genetic principles to screening for metabolic disorders: the Leybourne Grange survey of mentally subnormal siblings By Peter N. Swift, Philip F. Benson, and John D. Studdy. (Pp. 82; £2.) Royal College of Psychiatrists: London. 1973.

As can be seen from the title, this volume contains two separate studies. That by Dr. Davison centres on the unexplained higher frequency in males of mental subnormality. By selecting families in the Oxford area where there were two or more severely defective persons and where at least one member was alive, the findings were that there was an excess of males in this material and an excess of all-male sibships. The incidence of mental deficiency in relatives was not compatible with polygenic inheritance but favoured an X-linked recessive mode. These patients did not show any specific clinical findings, though there was a significant diminution in the ridge-count in patients from families where only males were affected. There appears therefore to be a considerable contribution to mental deficiency of a disorder or disorders transmitted as an X-linked recessive, although no particular clinical abnormalities are associated.

The second part of this volume is a study of a programme of screening for metabolic disorders in mentally defective patients at Leybourne Grange Hospital. Again the families studied were highly selected, the occurrence of subnormality in a sib being the essential requirement. Again in this group there was an excess of male patients. It seemed likely that some of the patients in this group were suffering from an X-linked disorder and that others, as suggested by the high incidence of parental consanguinity, were suffering from an autosomal recessive condition. In some families biochemical abnormalities were discovered, but as yet their relationship to the intellectual deficit is uncertain.

These studies demonstrated that there is likely to be a great deal of heterogeneity still remaining to be uncovered in the field of mental deficiency. It is by studies such as these that further refinement of diagnostic classification will be achieved.

R. T. C. PRATT