Book reviews

ACROMÉGALIE-GIGANTISME. TRAITEMENT CHIRURGICAL PAR EXÉRÈSE TRANSSPHÉNOÏDALE DE L'ADÉNOME HYPOPHYSAIRE. *Neurochirurgie*, 19, Suppl 2. By J. Hardy, F. Robert, M. Somma, and J. L. Vezina, with J. M. Blais, P. Dumas, A. Lanthier, R. Maltais. (Pp. 184; illustrated; price not stated.) Masson: Paris. 1973.

This important monograph describes in detail 40 acromegalic patients, including three giants, treated by transsphenoidal surgery, in the department of neurosurgery at Notre Dame Hospital, Montreal. The radiology, clinical presentation, and pre- and postoperative endocrine studies are described in detail. In 75% of the cases there was no spread of the tumour beyond the pituitary fossa, and in 25% the sella was not enlarged but showed localized bulging of the anterior inferior wall on one side. Growth hormone levels were measured in most patients and differing patterns of response to hyperglycaemia are described. Surgery was performed by the rhinoseptal transsphenoidal route, using the operating microscope and radiographic control. The aim of the treatment, when the tumour was confined to the pituitary fossa, was to remove only the adenoma and preserve the normal pituitary gland intact. This was achieved in 25 patients and in 11 of these there was recovery of previously depressed pituitary function.

Clearly, the concept of a growth hormone-secreting microadenoma which causes only minimal change in the radiograph of the pituitary fossa, and which can be selectively removed with preservation of the functioning normal pituitary gland, is an important one. However, these are slow growing tumours and careful follow-up will be needed to show whether this conservative surgery is really curative. It seems possible that some patients, treated by removal of only the adenoma with preservation of the remaining normal gland, will develop further symptoms, either from regrowth of the original tumour, or from the development of another tumour in the remaining anterior pituitary. However, it appears acceptable to treat the smaller tumours in this way, since more radical surgery can be undertaken later if necessary.

The work includes a section on the pathology, describing the gross, microscopic, and electron microscopy appearances, and the main part of the work is preceded by an interesting historical review.

The work is attractively presented and lavishly illustrated, and will be of considerable interest, particularly to endocrinologists.

This is an important therapeutic advance which deserves to be widely known.

R. D. ILLINGWORTH

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS: CLUES TO ITS CAUSE By Uri Leibowitz and Milton Alter. (Pp. 346; illustrated; \$28.10.) North-Holland: Amsterdam. 1973.

The authors have made many important contributions to the literature on multiple sclerosis which are incorporated in this book. The first part concerns the clinical studies in Israel and a comparison of the clinical pattern of the disease in various populations, European, Afro-Asian, Oriental, and Negro. The second part is chiefly concerned with epidemiological studies in Israel and the world. Their studies of immigrant and native born populations of Israel and Hawaii are of great importance and imply that the age of 15 years marks a critical period for acquiring multiple sclerosis. However, they admit that there are pitfalls in the migration data, chiefly the small number of patients involved. Their studies of the data on ethnic groups living together in similar environments, as well as more formal evaluation of the role of genetics in the aetiology of multiple sclerosis, suggest that genetic factors are less important than environmental factors. They consider, after much speculation about possible aetiological factors suggested by epidemiological research, that the agent which causes multiple sclerosis is most likely to be connected in some way with drinking water.

The book is full of interesting epidemiological information and is a worthy memorial to Dr Leibowitz who, unfortunately, died before his book was published.

J. H. D. MILLAR

MEDICAL NEUROBIOLOGY By William D. Willis, and Robert G. Grossman. (Pp. 457; illustrated; £9.) Kimpton: London. 1973.

This book is an account of the structure and function of the nervous system and is intended as an introduction to clinical studies. As such, it is appropriate for medical students undergoing integrated courses in anatomy and physiology but it should also be helpful to graduate students as an introduction to the neuro-