

NEUROLOGICAL COMPLICATIONS OF ORAL CONTRACEPTION By Edwin R. Bickerstaff. (Pp. 107; illustrated; £4.) Clarendon Press, Oxford University Press: London. 1975.

Dr Bickerstaff played an important part in convincing fellow neurologists of the part played by oral contraceptives in causing strokes in young women at a time when this was being hotly contested. It is a sharp reminder that statistics can be used to demonstrate that a relationship is unlikely to be due to chance alone but never to prove the converse. Many will be unfamiliar with his observation that the cerebrovascular danger of the Pill is largely in women who have already had a pregnancy. The exact cause-effect relationship remains obscure. Even more tantalising is the role of contraceptive hormones in chorea and other involuntary movements, papilloedema, benign intracranial hypertension, migraine, and epilepsy. In such an uncertain field all will welcome this short account of the author's experience and the available literature. The reviewer is regularly asked for advice on the safety of the Pill in patients with multiple sclerosis. This is one area in which Dr Bickerstaff does not venture an opinion.

J. A. SIMPSON

THE HUMAN NERVOUS SYSTEM By Murray L. Barry. (Pp. 442; illustrated; \$12.95.) Harper and Row: Hagerstown, Md. 1974.

This book, which appears in paperback as a second edition, provides a useful account of the anatomy of the nervous system. The main part of the book is devoted to a comprehensive account of the regional anatomy of the spinal cord, brain and special senses. This follows an introductory section on histology and later sections deal with the cerebral circulation and cerebrospinal fluid. The text is comprehensive without being exhaustive, and is easily read, clear and concise, and there are many excellent line diagrams and half-tone illustrations. Although the emphasis is on morphology, there are useful reviews of the functions of the parts described and of relevant clinical disorders. At the end of each chapter there is a short but carefully selected list of references. The book has been written primarily for students approaching the neurological sciences for the first time, but post-graduate students and practising clinicians will also find it useful. It can be warmly recommended.

J. A. R. LENMAN

BRAIN DISORDERS By S. Bogoch. (Pp. 312; illustrated; £12.15.) Spectrum: New York. 1974.

This volume of proceedings of a Conference on the Future of Brain Sciences reviews many aspects of current research into brain physiology, anatomy, and

biochemistry, and in most instances the experts have contributed original papers.

In a short 20 years, neurology has moved in neuroscientific knowledge from basic chemistry of lipoproteins to detailed studies of neurotransmitters. Treatment of behaviour disorders has advanced from leucotomy to the use of stimuloreceivers.

To a clinical neurologist the glimpse we now have of links between structure and function is vastly encouraging. For example, neurones destined to form a given pathway seem to carry molecular labels which allow them to be connected (or regenerate) according to a plan laid down in some genetic blueprint. From such a coded pathway for reflex and instinctive behaviour, as Virgas points out, it is not a large leap to see how this system could be adapted for processing acquired information. The language is, as might be expected, in places rather modern. One author comments 'one can easily intuit such a mechanism'. The brain sciences need innovators in all the teams of interdisciplinary research in order to sustain recent momentum.

The report of the conference, which was truly international, was integrated with visits to laboratories and was strictly limited in size, is likely to outlast in usefulness the reports of unwieldy world congresses filled with disparate and unoriginal papers which are disgorged in increasing numbers by publishing houses each year.

R. BANNISTER

ATLAS OF GROSS NEUROSURGICAL PATHOLOGY By Klaus J. Zulch. (Pp. 228; illustrated; \$49.) Springer: Berlin. 1975.

This atlas deals solely with gross neurosurgical pathology. Indeed one might question the accuracy of the title since only two topics are dealt with in detail, namely, increased intracranial pressure and displacement caused by space-occupying lesions, and tumours of the nervous system. There is no section on head injuries—this will be the subject of a subsequent atlas—while there are only short sections on cerebrovascular disease, inflammation, brain swelling and obstructive hydrocephalus.

As one might expect from Professor Zulch, the two major topics are dealt with superbly, an abundance of illustrations being accompanied by a concise, informative, and in some ways slightly provocative text. But Professor Zulch's observations are based on a wealth of experience that must always command respect.

One could not unreasonably question the number of illustrations and suggest that there is some repetition, but anyone with an interest in the nervous system could not fail to be fascinated by the almost