

Book reviews

INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON PAIN Edited by J. J. Bonica. (Pp. 834; illustrated; \$41.90.) Raven Press: New York. 1974.

This book is full of good things. There is a most thoughtful and fundamental paper on cutaneous sensibility by P. R. Burgess, and Iggo reports valuable new material on the same subject. Hallin and Torebjörk report the work they have been doing in the last four years, recording from both myelinated and non-myelinated fibres in conscious man. This is important work that all neurologists should follow. This development, instigated by Torebjörk, Hallin, Yallbo, and Hagbarth in recent years, is the direct recording from the nerve fibres of peripheral nerves in man. It means that there is no longer any necessity to try to work out what happens by arguing back and forth between the data from small fur-bearing mammals and odd data in man, such as the effects of ischaemia and of local anaesthetics.

There is a paper summarizing a lot of recent work on the somatosensory input to the thalamus by Bowsher.

Some reprehensible experiments, which nevertheless are most relevant to certain pathological states, are reported by R. G. Black of Seattle. Epileptogenic substances were applied to various regions of the central nervous systems of a large number of cats and a few monkeys. When such substances were put into the tip of the posterior horn, the animals would at first groom the segment excessively until they had licked the fur away and had macerated the skin. Then it was found that the lightest touch or merely blowing on the skin caused a brisk withdrawal reaction. Later, paroxysms of apparent pain occurred every 2 to 20 minutes. These animals became preoccupied with their state of misery. A similar state was produced by making a similar discharging lesion in the descending spinal nucleus of the 5th cranial nerve. These animals avoided letting anything touch that side of their faces. After this condition had developed, a peripheral nerve block stopped this painful state. In cats, trigeminal rhizotomy produced excessive activity in the neurones of the trigeminal nucleus, and this activity resembled that induced by the local injection of epileptogenic substances. Some of this work has been published already, but it makes a total picture when it is all read together.

Dr Pagni contributes a very good paper on stereotactic operations for pain. There is a paper on the current role of neurolytic agents by J. Katz. The final conclusion, drawn from the world literature, is that subarachnoid phenol or alcohol is useful only when the expectation of life is short, as in cases of advanced cancer. Dr Moricca reports on his operation of pituitary neuro-adenolysis for the pain of cancer. Hymes, Raab, Yonehiro, Nelson, and Printy report the use of percutaneous electric stimulation as a reliever of postoperative pain. Patients who used this stimulation never had ileus and the incidence of atelectasis was significantly reduced. The patients reckoned that their perception of pain was reduced by about 80%.

Of interest are four papers on acupuncture. The most important fact to be reported was that acupuncture did not cure any painful condition in patients who were not hypnotizable. There were five patients reported on who had acupuncture anaesthesia, one for an operation on the shoulder-joint, one for the removal of a tumour of the thigh, and another for tonsillectomy, and two for dental extraction.

Like all books nowadays, this book costs a lot of money; but unlike all books nowadays, this one may be worth it.

P. W. NATHAN

WRITING SCIENTIFIC PAPERS IN ENGLISH By Maeve O'Connor and F. Peter Woodford. (Pp. 108; illustrated; Dfl. 21.00.) Elsevier/Excerpta Medica/North-Holland: Amsterdam. 1975.

ELSE (European Life Science Editors) is the acronym adopted by the European Association of Editors of Biological Periodicals. With the cooperation of the Ciba Foundation, London, they have produced a very valuable short guide for authors. It takes the embryo author through all stages of planning and writing a scientific paper. If you want your work printed with the minimum delay you *must* read this book and lend it to your secretary. It takes account of both British and American English usage and recognizes the idiosyncrasies of editors and journals. 'When all else fails, read the instructions' applies to scientific publication as much as to machinery failure.

J. A. SIMPSON