

Book reviews

OUTCOME OF SEVERE DAMAGE TO THE CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM CIBA Symposium. (Pp. 354; illustrated; \$24.75.) North Holland: Amsterdam. 1975.

To those who tire of large conferences with their packed programmes, stilted discussion, and indigestible proceedings a CIBA symposium is a reminder that meetings of the right size, with appropriate participants, and a suitable subject, can be a worthwhile experience not only for those invited but for others to read about. The subject of this one is of particular importance, now that more patients survive severe CNS damage than formerly, and often present the problem of continuing disability. Most of the discussion was about brain damage, particularly from head injury, but experimental spinal cord damage was also discussed. Basic scientists and psychologists discussed with neurologists, neurosurgeons, and psychiatrists the possible mechanisms of recovery based both on animal experiments and on observations of recovering human victims. Alternatives are recovery of sick neurones, regeneration at various levels or the use of alternative pathways or neurone networks, which would involve a learning process. These might each have a different time course. Serial studies suggest that there is probably a basic recovery curve, a natural history of recovery related to time. If this can be established it should then be possible to compare the efficacy of different measures designed to achieve quicker or more complete recovery, such as rehabilitation. It became clear at this meeting that mental disability usually contributes more significantly than physical handicap to the ultimate *social* outcome. Early psychosocial counselling of the family may be as important as effort directed at the patient himself. The theoretical foundation of predictive schemes was discussed, and the practical application of these to stroke, to severe head injury and to non-traumatic coma. The impression left by this symposium is that work in many areas of the field of recovery in the CNS is still at an early stage, but that pilot studies are sufficiently encouraging to justify intensifying the efforts. In the experimental laboratory there is need for study of the recovery process, at functional and structural levels. In the clinic the need is for closer and more structured observation of the phenomenon of recovery and the collection of data on several aspects of this simultaneously and serially. This publication provides an invaluable review of the present state of knowledge in this difficult field, and should be a useful point of reference for some time.

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VASOACTIVE SUBSTANCES RELEVANT TO MIGRAINE Edited by S. Diamond, D. J. Dalessio, J. R. Graham, and J. L. Medina. (Pp. 102; illustrated; \$11.50.) Thomas: Springfield, Ill. 1975.

Many neurologists have been fascinated by the problem of migraine and research into this disorder has developed rapidly in recent years. It is increasingly agreed that the vasomotor changes which occur in the disorder are related to biochemical and pharmacological changes, and many vasoactive substances which are naturally present in the body have had their protagonists.

This book is based on a symposium held in New York City in June 1973, and it seems unfortunate that it should have taken two years to publish, as it is now the principle to produce the associated volume to a congress in as short a time as possible. The proceedings of a recent conference on cerebral blood flow were produced in only three months. This stricture would seem also justified by the length of the book which, even with the index, is only 102 pages. Nevertheless, it is an important review, for the organisers of the conference have succeeded in bringing major contributors to their symposium, and the book is therefore, a valuable guide to much current thinking in the pathophysiology of migraine. The authors include Dr Karl Ekbom, who writes on adrenergic betareceptor blockers, and Professor Merton Sandler, who describes current work on monoamines and migraine. Sandler's review is particularly valuable as he has been the protagonist of phenylethylamine as a triggering factor in dietary migraine. Other workers examine the roles of histamine, prostaglandins, and the renin-angiotensin system, and Dr Marcia Wilkinson, whose work at the City Migraine Clinic in London is well known, discusses the role of tyramine.

Such is the authority of the authors, and the excellent production of the monograph, that it will be of use to both clinical and pharmacological research workers who are studying this disorder. One small grievance is that it is unfortunate that the editors did not lay down a more consistent form of presentation: some of the chapters, for example, are profusely illustrated with graphs whereas many have no figures. In spite of this, and the cost, which seems high for such a short book, it is strongly recommended to those interested in research in migraine.

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