Book reviews

Neural Regulation of the Heart Edited by W. C. Randall. (Pp. 440; illustrated; £13.50.) Oxford Medical Publications, Oxford University Press: Oxford. 1977.

Knowledge of the nervous control of the heart has developed greatly in the last 15 years, and this book is planned to bring together the findings. The book describes the sympathetic and parasympathetic control of the heart, the reflexes from the chest and from the heart itself which affect the heart, the mechanisms in the brain and spinal cord which mediate these reflexes, and the consequences for cardiac function of denervation as in transplantation. Chapters begin with a succinct historical review, and the editor has kept an excellent balance. The book fills its role well. It is largely concerned with animals, but brings out the clinical relevance of findings and concludes with a chapter on the neural effects on the ECG and heart rhythm.

J. M. K. SPALDING

Advances in Neurology Volume 16 Stroke Edited by R. A. Thompson and J. R. Green. (Pp. 237; illustrated; \$24.00.) Raven Press: New York. 1977.

The contributors to this volume are clearly actively engaged in the management of strokes for, while their reviews of the status of scientific knowledge are thorough and up-to-date, their appraisal of the knowledge is very much orientated to the clinical situation. This is well exemplified in the chapter on platelets in relation to stroke. This provides an excellent survey of current knowledge but, referring to trials of antiplatelet agents in TIAs, declares, 'If neither of these trials gives an unequivocal result, we may be involved for a long time in evaluating their empirical but unproven use'. In the chapter on the management of TIAs the author makes it clear that the former passion for visualising all possible vessels was misdirected and unrewarding. An eclectic approach, which usually involves visualisation of both carotid systems with selective

display of other vessels when there are special indications, is advocated—a policy with which the present reviewer would very much agree.

The operation of anastomosing the superficial temporal artery to a branch of the middle cerebral pioneered by Yasargil has often been described as 'an operation looking for an indication'. Sound indications are provided here: middle cerebral stenosis; inaccessible internal carotid or middle cerebral occlusion with inadequate collaterals as shown by the fact that the patient continues with intermittent ischaemic attacks after the occlusion; and the management of some giant aneurysms.

Anyone concerned with the management of strokes—which means most physicians—will find in this volume a reliable review of current knowledge combined with sound practical advice on management.

JOHN MARSHALL

Stroke: Proceedings of the Ninth Pfizer International Symposium Edited by F. J. Gillingham, C. Mawdsley, and A. E. Williams. (Pp. 541; illustrated; £12.00.) Churchill Livingstone: Edinburgh, London, New York. 1976.

All symposia proceedings have to contend with the inbuilt disadvantage that the need for their very existence can be questioned. Symposia on stroke have the extra handicap that they recur regularly and have to compete with similar symposia held in other places.

The proceedings of the ninth Pfizer Symposium on Stroke has all of these problems but does have the advantage, for British readers at least, that two-thirds of the participants come from the United Kingdom. This gives a somewhat more pertinent feel to some of the papers, particularly in the sections on epidemiology. This is not to deny the importance of some of the transatlantic contributions which, as with some others in the surgical section, give a hint of some significant advances in treatment of aneurysms. The overall message sadly, however, is not very optimistic despite the enthusiasm and hard work

of so many clearly dedicated people. Although it is recognised that stroke in old age may be perhaps more acceptable, the lessons gained from investigating and treating these, even with little dramatic result may eventually lead to some more useful way to combat this unkind wrecker of normal life when it occurs in the younger patient.

ALLAN W. DOWNIE

Cerebrovascular Diseases Tenth Princeton Conference Edited by Peritz Scheinberg. (Pp. 388; illustrated; \$24.00.) Raven Press: New York. 1976.

It is hard to believe that these conferences have attained the dignity of having been held over a period of 22 years. This one concentrates on selected aspects of the problem but even so cannot escape the plethora of facts and figures which make reading and understanding of the message so difficult. The surgical contributions particularly on microsurgical anastomosis offer a more finite topic with a more hopeful therapeutic message. Not a book for bedside reading.

ALLAN W. DOWNIE

The Clinical Neurosciences Volume 2 of The Nervous System Volume Editor Thomas N. Chase, Editor-in-Chief Donald B. Tower. (Pp. 556; illustrated; \$15.00.) Raven Press: New York. 1976. To review the advances in clinical neurology over the 25 years since the formation of the National Institute of Neurological and Communicative Disorders and Stroke without writing a short textbook of neurology is quite a problem since these years have seen the establishment of neurology as an independent clinical discipline, with major advances in many areas. This volume does not succeed quite so well as the first volume, *The Basic Neurosciences*. It may be relevant that the most important advances are in those subjects where biochemistry has been available, as in the lipidoses and other metabolic