Book reviews

Modern Practical Neurology By Peritz Scheinberg. (Pp. 228; illustrated; cloth \$21.00, paper \$12.00.) Raven Press: New York. 1977.

This book has been brought out as an introduction to the diagnosis and management of common neurological disorders, primarily for non-neurologists. As an introduction it fulfills its purpose, but is its purpose worthwhile? Text-books vary in their scope from introductions to reviews, from monographs on a single disease to general surveys of the whole of an organ system. The place for these is established and any overlap is to be encouraged rather than decried, but of all these an 'Introduction to . . . ' is the most difficult to justify because all the information in such a book is already available. This type of information, however, usually sought by nonspecialists, is often present in a form which may be physically as well as mentally unwieldy. Professor Scheinberg's little book is a personal account of common problems dealing little with theories or theoretical mechanisms and can be recommended purely as an introduction. Its scope embraces all common neurological illnesses, including a section on management of the unconscious patient. It tends to swing from diseases to symptom complexes but is none the worse for this. Each chapter ends with a somewhat formidable list of suggested reading—formidable if one is actually intending to read them all, useful as a quick guide to references, but unfortunately not completely up-to-date. Where it overlaps it suffers from comparison with its competitors but nevertheless the book can be recommended to non-neurologists.

L. S. ILLIS

Peripheral Nerve Block By F. L. Jenkner. (Pp. 116; illustrated; Dm. 23.00.) Springer-Verlag: Vienna, New York. 1977.

Peripheral nerve block has gone out of fashion for surgical anaesthesia and few physicians now use it for the treatment of pain, except in special clinics. The author of this pocket book rightly considers that a valuable technique would be more widely used if the occasional operator had a convenient guide avail-

able. He has provided this in a sensible, practical book clearly indicating techniques, indications, and disadvantages. The possible complications should be clearly understood by the operator. A valuable feature is a set of charts of the peripheral nerve supply to different areas of the extremity bones. A closing section gives a brief account of transdermal stimulation by electricity for the treatment of pain, but the use of a stimulator attached to an injection needle for localisation of a nerve before injecting it is not described.

Intending users of nerve blocks with local anaesthetics would do well to study the section on complications and their treatment, and to have at hand the resuscitation equipment listed.

J. A. SIMPSON

Neurology of Aging Volume 3 of Aging Edited by R. D. Terry and S. Gershon. (Pp. 452; illustrated; \$34.50.) Raven Press: New York. 1976.

Success stories of the last 20 years have been the advances in paediatric neurology and the control of population in advanced countries. In the next epoch the major problems facing neurologists and psychiatrists will be those of old age, and especially of dementia. It is not too soon to turn a major part of our research efforts to the neurobiology of aging. Not surprisingly, we are still at the stage of erecting and testing hypotheses, and real advances cannot be expected until such fundamental questions are answered as the turning on or off of genetic instructions, the role of immunology in the brain in particular and in the handling of affected cells or incorrectly specified cell-components, and the alteration of neurotransmitters associated with degenerative changes in neurones, fall-out of cells, or changes in glial function. These problems are already being tackled in ingenious ways. This book is based on a symposium, but covers the ground quite systematically. For reasons of time, and to reach a biologically oriented audience, it has deliberately omitted clinical aspects of cerebral aging though including some excellent pathological studies. Nevertheless, it is recommended to clinicians as an indication of the basic problems. Essential

clues often come from observations of clinicians, but they are less likely to be overlooked if the observer is aware of the type of data required. This could be an exciting area for the future.

J. A. SIMPSON

Handbook of Sensory Physiology Volume 3 Auditory System, Clinical and Special Topics Edited by Wolf P. Keidel and William D. Neff. (Pp. 876; illustrated; price not stated.) Springer Verlag: Berlin, Heidelberg, New York. 1976.

The final volume of the Handbook section on the Auditory System is important to clinicians. Opening with a splendid review of sensorineural deafness by C. S. Hallpike, the 16 chapters contain much valuable reference material on hearing equilibrium and disease. The chapters by Hallpike, Davis and W. D. Keidel on electrical response audiometry and by E. Hawkins on drug ototoxicity are authoritative. These chapters have been helpful to the reviewer, but the whole book is of a high standard in a subject which has been relatively neglected by neurologists. Needless to say, it is beautifully produced.

J. A. SIMPSON

A Concise Encyclopaedia of Psychiatry By Denis Leigh, C. M. B. Pare, and John Marks. (Pp. 400; illustrated; £6.95.) MTP Press: Lancaster. 1977.

This book provides deceptively simple definitions and comment upon a wide range of psychiatric topics and on those subjects which verge on psychiatry but find no place in ordinary textbooks. Most of the entries are relatively short, but the major subjects, for example depression, are treated in more detail, each extending to several pages. Having been written and published in Britain, the sections relating to psychiatric illness and the law are especially relevant to British readers. Like any good reference book, this encyclopaedia stimulates the reader to move from topic to topic, and the presentation makes the information readily available and adds to the pleasure of browsing.

I. T. DRAPER