Book reviews

Handbook of Clinical Neurology Volume 20 Tumours of the Spine and Spinal Cord Part II Edited by P. J. Vinken and G. W. Bruyn. (Pp. 854; illustrated; price not stated.) North-Holland Publishing Company: Amsterdam. 1976.

Reviewing a volume of this series recently I remarked that this great work was drawing to a close. The Editorial Secretary wrote in some surprise, pointing out that 36 volumes are currently being prepared and a few further topics are planned. There is certainly no indication of this in the order form with this volume which invites subscriptions to the complete work without hinting that there are more than the 25 listed. The cost is becoming very serious, not only for individual subscribers but also for hospital unit libraries. In these circumstances, is it justifiable to have colour photographs which add nothing except decoration? This volume has many of them. Indeed, no journal would tolerate the excessive number of tables of useless figures. No statistics can be derived from them as the population at risk is unknown and the criteria for publication. The reader cannot make conclusions for his own practice. Certainly this reviewer would not buy almost 200 pages on neurogenic intermittent claudication consisting largely of very personal formulae. The regular subscriber will not wish to miss any volume. It is, therefore, incumbent on the editors to apply the usual critical criteria. Have the instructions to authors been modified since the reviewer's modest contribution to an earlier volume? If not, do the editors seriously consider that the balance of this volume is correct? It has some excellent contributions, not least on disc syndromes which, like stenosis of the vertebral canal, were unexpected in a volume on spinal tumours. As the editors point out in the Foreword, the spinal canal is scarcely a candidate for a protean gamut of functional derangement. But the opportunity for editorial condensation is missed. How frustrating to have such an excellent work on the

shelf which I will never have time to read while in active practice. Is that really what we require?

J. A. SIMPSON

Spinal Cord Injuries: Comprehensive Management and Research By Sir Ludwig Guttman. Second Edition. (Pp. 731; illustrated; £21.00.) Blackwell: Oxford. 1976.

To justify the subtitle *Comprehensive Management and Research* it is essential that Sir Ludwig Guttman's *Spinal Cord Injuries* should keep pace with the rapid advances which have followed in the train of the expanding service for spinal cord injuries stimulated by Sir Ludwig himself. The author has, therefore, to a large extent, brought upon himself the formidable task of revision.

The second edition of this book, which was first published in 1973, remains a comprehensive account of every aspect of spinal cord injury, and it is a monument to the achievement and views of Sir Ludwig. The introductory sections which catalogue the centres for spinal injury and their staff have been expanded and indicate not only the services for paraplegia across the world but the part played by Stoke Mandeville in the training of their staff. There is included a note of the tribute to Sir Ludwig himself by the establishment of a clinical department in Heidelberg 'Ludwig Guttman-Hause'.

Particular attention has been given to the sections concerned with spinal cord ischaemia: the problem of venous thrombosis, pulmonary embolism, its prophylaxis and treatment with anticoagulants, has been reviewed in the light of new knowledge derived from studies in general surgical procedures: soft tissue calcification has been given special attention with reference to modern work upon its prevention but without putting forward any solution to its prevention. In general, the sections on management of spinal cord paralysis and its complications have been expanded.

Some of the opinions expressed by Sir Ludwig may not be accepted universally. He has, for instance, included in chapter six the view that the director of the unit should be 'entitled' to receive a professorship. Lawyers are unlikely to find flattering his interpretation of the problems associated with litigation.

There has been an increase of over 70 in the already large number of references providing a valuable source of information and a basis for further advances in the management of paraplegia by those of an enquiring mind.

J. B. COOK

Head Injuries Edited by Robert McLaurin. (Pp. 301; illustrated; \$12.50 £7.60.) Grune and Stratton: New York. 1976.

The volume of writings and the frequency of meetings about special topics are seldom proportional to the social importance or health service burden of their subjects. Indeed these often focus on subjects so obscure or rare that most of those who are sufficiently knowledgeable to be interested have already been involved in their production. Not so with head injuries, which are so common that they are easily regarded as commonplace – yet they pose many complex and poorly understood problems. There is now evidence that government agencies on both sides of the Atlantic are realising the cost of head injuries in the community, and that attention is being focused on them. In the United States a number of head injury centres have been funded by the National Institutes of Health, following the resolution of a head injury conference in Chicago in 1966. The present book documents the progress made by these centres, in the form of reports of ongoing work given at the 2nd Chicago Symposium on Neural Trauma in 1975.

One section dealt with prognosis and includes laboratory data on intracranial pressure, evoked potentials, biochemical values, and various combinations of