Book reviews

evaluation of therapy leave much to be desired, and any results from these trials are worthless. I am at a loss, therefore, to know why this book was published. It contains no new data, and several of the reports claim that immunosuppressive therapy is of benefit in the progressive form of the disease while others find benefit only in patients with a relapsing course. This hotch-potch of clinical trials, some of them not even completed and some lacking suitable controls, cannot be recommended.

PETER O. BEHAN


This is a large work on a rare syndrome. The authors have studied 392 patients over 11 years, and they report on their psychological and neurological findings in detail. They also review the quite extensive literature and discuss the neurophysiology, psychopathology, neurochemistry, and neuropathology of the syndrome. There is an important section on treatment, in which pride of place is given to haloperidol, and a final section of proposals for further research.

Most neurologists and psychiatrists see too few patients suffering from this distressing syndrome to acquire enough knowledge at first hand to enable them to treat such patients. The present volume will provide an excellent source book for the doctor who is only occasionally required to treat this condition. The book is also, by American standards, reasonably priced, at least for a library's budget.

J. L. GIBBONS


My psychiatric reading to date has not included any of the late Professor Fish's books but his reputation led me to be favourably predisposed to this text. Moreover, being an outline, a comprehensive work was not anticipated. Unfortunately I am unable to recommend this edition, almost all chapters being open to criticism—for example, Schneider's first rank symptoms of schizophrenia appear in the section on paranoid states, "typical flight of ideas" is said to be impossible to follow, "depressive reaction" is dismissed in one paragraph, behaviour therapy is not mentioned in the treatment of obsessional reactions. These objections apart, the approach which leads to subdividing organic states into 17 syndromes, many of which merge into each other, and there being no possibility of these being eventually susceptible to a specific treatment, seems inappropriate. Surely such hairsplitting will only serve to confuse the potential reader who is choosing among available texts of similar length.

J. A. G. WATT


This little book contains 300 multiple choice questions, arranged in five sets of 60 questions. The format is that used in many postgraduate examinations in Britain, the "multiple true-false" variety. There are a few hints on how to deal with a multiple choice question paper and a reading list. The title is rather misleading as the content of the questions is not general psychiatry but rather those disciplines basic to psychiatry that make up the syllabus of the Preliminary Test of the Royal College of Psychiatrists. The purpose of the book is to provide practice for candidates.

J. L. GIBBONS


The aim of this book is to give a didactic account of a standardised method of conducting a psychiatric diagnostic interview. It is directed at trainee psychiatrists and relies heavily on the authors' experience in developing and teaching the method of the Present State Examination as a research tool. The merits of the book have in the main come out of this work, for example, the method of eliciting symptoms by polite cross-questioning, the definitions of schizophrenic psychopathology, and the assessment of severity of neurotic symptoms. The last chapter, Case Presentation, is excellent, succinct advice and should be read immediately by any junior psychiatrist whose consultant shuffles impatiently when presented with a case history, and by any candidate who has failed the clinical section of Part II of the MRC Psych Examination.

The book is, however, seriously flawed. It makes exciting clinical signs appear boring and routine. Despite the authors' apparently jaded enthusiasm for clinical phenomena, chapter 2, First Impressions, reads like an undergraduate examination answer and lacks any conviction of clinical experience or sense of proportion. The book does not even attempt to make biological sense out of clinical signs and symptoms, and is written for "apprentice fitters" rather than "apprentice engineers." There is no attempt to accommodate any of the philosophy behind the problem-oriented approach.

The overall impression is of a watered-down version of the Present State Examination and its glossary, perhaps written for trainees whose first language is not English. This suspicion is strengthened when one finds the heading Third Person Auditory Hallucinations asterisked, and the footnote stating "in grammar the first person is I, the second person is you, and the third person is he, she, or it."

This book deserves a place in the library for the reasons outlined in the first paragraph. I will also try it out on my undergraduate students but without major alteration it does not merit becoming the authors' intention of a practical handbook.

E. P. WORRALL


This is one of the very few general textbooks of neuropsychology, and the author is uniquely well equipped to write the book, having both a medical and a psychological background. This background is reflected in the introductory chapters which contain not only an interesting review of history of neuropsychology, but also a brief account of neuroanatomy and neurology.
sufficient to stimulate and interest psychologists, and to give the non-neurologically sophisticated medical practitioner a refresher.

The meat of the book is contained in chapters 4 to 9 in which the author discusses the neuropsychological dysfunctions observed with lesions of the four cerebral lobes, and then gives an account of hemispheric asymmetry and the principles of neuropsychological examination. Dr Walsh has wisely decided not to include animal studies, and the coverage of the human literature is comprehensive. As far as it is ever possible in a book of this kind, the material is up-to-date, although (to take one area) recent developments in the study of amnesia have already moved beyond the formulation given.

There is no doubt that this book fills a tremendous need. It will become the basis against which future textbooks of neuropsychology will be evaluated, and it will be required reading for many undergraduate and postgraduate psychologists. Neurosurgeons will find much of interest, and I suspect that many neurologists may be discovered reading the book in the privacy of their own consulting rooms. Dr Walsh is to be congratulated.

D. NEIL BROOKS


Over a period of 18 months, Miss Oswin, an experienced teacher, spent her time in the children's wards of eight mental handicap hospitals. Despite the multiplicity of Reports and Working Parties of the past 15 years, her book reveals a continuing chaotic state of affairs. It is a pathetic tale of a shambles of a service, which avoids the usual polemics and philosophical meanderings beloved by people not working in this field.

There is no doubt that the Education Act, bringing teachers into the hospitals, is one of the milestones of British education, and while this move has been criticised as involving a lot of expenditure for little productivity, the issue is not a fiscal but a humane one. I would, however, have liked more practical information on teaching children who are virtually decorticate. As a whole the book is useful and constructive. It draws attention once again to the importance of respecting the human dignity of the handicapped child and helping him to achieve his fullest potential.

RONALD C. MACGILLIVRAY

Convulsiones en la Infancia By Natalio Fejerman and Carlos S. Medina. (Pp. 387; illustrated; price not stated.) Editorial Ergon: Buenos Aires. 1977. This is a welcome addition to the study of infantile convulsions written in Spanish by two paediatric neurologists in Buenos Aires. The volume is divided into 17 chapters and many more sub-chapters, and is based on a fairly long clinical experience (14 and 10 years respectively). The prefaces of both Professors Carlos Gianantonio and Professor Bernabe Cantion are full of praise.

The first chapter on epidemiology of convulsive phenomena is a limited review of the literature covering six pages with only 11 references, the most recent being of early 1975. A brief description of the physiological basis of electroencephalography and some of its normal and pathological features forms the second chapter with 29 references up to 1974. More space is devoted to the neurological examination and to the ophthalmoscopic and neuroradiological investigations including computerised tomography. The classification of the epilepsies is largely based on the views of Professors Gastaut and Merlis, both adult-orientated in 1970. Terminology becomes more complex in the discussion of petit mal, and in a Table on page 91 the authors suggest five different types (pure petit mal; petit mal with additional motor phenomena; petit mal with automatisms; petit mal complicated by other forms of epilepsy; petit mal complicated by focal lesions). A number of interesting statements are quoted from a limited literature as to the evolution and prognosis of petit mal.

Other chapters are devoted to myoclonic phenomena, to severe forms of epilepsy in infancy (syndrome of West and syndrome of Lennox), and to so-called febrile convulsions, (eight pages). The authors state that between 1 and 5% of all children below the age of 5 years will have at some stage at least one febrile convolution. They are hesitant as to whether febrile convulsions should be considered as a particular form of epilepsy in infancy or not.

The authors support the views of Margaret Lennox-Buchthal and Ounsted but recommend to limit the term of febrile convulsions to "habitually generalised convulsions associated with an acute common infection in infancy, lasting a few minutes and second more frequently between 9 and 24 months of age." Probably the febrile part is understood within the term common infection.

In addition to focal, partial, and "hemi-generalised" convulsions, a long chapter is devoted to "temporal epilepsy" (20 pages) while only seven pages are given to status epilepticus.

A chapter on convulsions of the newborn has been prepared by C. T. Longbroso and N. Alvarez from Boston (19 pages) while an interesting chapter covers non-epileptic paroxysmal attacks which include narcolepsy, migraine, breath holding attacks, and paroxysmal vertigo. Drug therapy of the epilepsies and a brief note on prevention and prognosis complete the text while the second portion of the book forms an Atlas of Electroencephalography in Childhood. The illustrations of 8-channel EEGs are very clear and well selected.

This book in Spanish integrates both clinical and EEG features of children with convulsions and tries to review the literature without quarrelling with anybody's views. The bibliography is obviously limited to what was available in the libraries of Buenos Aires up to early 1975. The EEG atlas portion will be very useful to beginners, and it might become even more valuable if a section on the normal EEG in childhood was included for comparison with the pathological aspects.

G. PAMPIGLIONE

Notice

The Fifth International Meeting in Pediatric Neurology and Neurosurgery will be held at the Hospital del Niño DIF, Mexico from 24–27 January 1979. Information may be obtained from the Hospital del Niño DIF Congress Office, Insurgentes Sur 3700, Mexico 22 DF, Tel: (90) 573-53-48.