

## Book reviews

**Friedrich Schiller Medicine, Psychology, Literature** By Kenneth Dewhurst and Nigel Reeves. (Pp. 413+xii; illustrated; £12.00.) Sandford Publications: Oxford. 1978.

For the majority of cultivated people outside the German speaking countries Friedrich Schiller is probably best known as dramatist and poet. His play *Kabale und Liebe* was the source of the libretto of Verdi's *Luisa Miller*, an opera which was successfully revived in the last Covent Garden season after an interval of a hundred years. Schiller was also the source of the libretti of Verdi's *Don Carlos* and Rossini's *Wilhelm Tell*. His first play *Die Rauber*, produced at Mannheim in 1782, was enthusiastically received, and the success it brought enabled him to escape from his career as an army doctor. Schubert was particularly attracted by Schiller's verse and set no less than 42 of his poems to music, despite the difficulties posed by their philosophical content. Yet Schiller was always the philosopher, and his drama and verse communicated his ideas in forms which gained wide acceptance and understanding in his own lifetime.

Kenneth Dewhurst, the psychiatrist and medical historian, and Nigel Reeves, professor of German at the University of Surrey, have combined to write this excellent book. The first part is biographical, containing a vivid account of Schiller's education at the Military Academy, founded by the Duke of Württemberg, and his later medical training in the enlarged Academy at Stuttgart from 1775 to 1780. Further chapters deal with his brief career as a regimental doctor and subsequent pursuit of the creative life which was rightly his.

The next two chapters deal with contemporary medical theories and the emergence of the psychological sciences. In these pages the authors set the medical, scientific, and philosophical scene obtaining at the time of Schiller's education. They have been remarkably successful in producing a comprehensible, coherent account of the complex ideas and theories to which the young man was exposed.

Part 3 consists of the first English edition of Schiller's complete medical and psychological writings, including his dissertations on the philosophy of physiology and the connection between the animal and spiritual nature of man.

The last chapter traces the significance of Schiller's training as a doctor for the literary, philosophical, and aesthetic works on which his fame rests. The argument is too concentrated to lend itself to summary here. Indeed, this is true of the whole book. Dr Dewhurst and Professor Reeves' publication deserves the attention of all who are interested in the growth of ideas and, more especially, in the life and works of a man we are proud to acknowledge as a physician who forsook his early training for a wider stage, yet never forgot the lessons learned in Duke Karl Eugen's medical school at Stuttgart. This book is highly recommended.

R. A. HENSON

**Advanced Medicine 14** Edited by D. J. Weatherall. (Pp. 385; illustrated; £8.50.) Pitman Medical: Tunbridge Wells. 1978.

This is a further volume based on a symposium at the Royal College of Physicians of London, in the same format as previous volumes. It is always amazing, and disconcerting, to find how much new material is presented every year, but the main value to the reader is the changing emphases of specialists concentrating on a limited field. This year the subject headings are gastroenterology, hypertension, clinical genetics, myocardial infarction, clinical haematology, infection, asthma, and growing areas in the basic medical sciences. The latter heading includes a valuable lecture by D. G. Grahame-Smith on clinical implications of recent advances in neuropharmacology. Other lectures of neurological interest are on the autonomic nervous system and hypertension (J. L. Reid), cerebral autoregulation and its disturbances in hypertension (J. V. Jones), slow viruses and the nervous system (W. B. Matthews), and, in the Lilly Lecture on infection, a section on experimental meningitis by R. G. Petersdorf. The important neurological complications are not mentioned in the

lecture on Gram-negative bacteraemia.

Production and editing are excellent. The transatlantic spelling is acceptable in a reprint of a lecture, but is it wise to permit American proprietary names for drugs?

J. A. SIMPSON

**Cerebral Computed Tomography** By Leon A. Weisberg, Charles Nice, and Myron Katz. (Pp. 337; illustrated; £15.75.) W. B. Saunders: Philadelphia, London, Toronto. 1978.

This book, written by a neurologist, neuroradiologist, and a mathematician is directed towards neurologists, neurosurgeons, and other physicians who will be using computed tomography in the investigation of their patients, and the book is organised from this point of view.

A relatively short first part deals with the theory, technical aspects, and normal appearances of brain sections. In general this section is good but, in my opinion the theoretical concepts are not presented in terms which would be readily understood by clinicians and is sparsely illustrated; for example, none of the many artefacts discussed are reproduced. This chapter is more suited to radiologists with practical experience of the features being described.

The main part of the book deals with elucidation of specific neurological symptoms and signs. Such a division has obvious difficulties and some conditions should, logically, be included in more than one chapter. However, there is remarkably little overlap, and each chapter deals in depth with a particular clinico-radiological problem. Computed tomography is never considered in isolation and most chapters are, in fact, a very good review of the diagnostic approach to a specific condition, emphasising the advantages and limitations of computed tomography. The illustrations are of good quality and well selected though, inevitably, there are some exceptions, and this especially applies to the orbits where recent advances in imaging techniques allow considerably more definition and

coronal orbital sections which are now in routine use in many conditions are not illustrated.

The book is well balanced and lucidly written. There is a good index. The most notable feature is the price—at £15.75 it is excellent value for money. It is recommended not only to clinicians but also to radiologists as an introduction to the subject.

B. E. KENDALL

**Physiology and Pathobiology of Axons** Edited by Stephen G. Waxman. (Pp. 448; illustrated; \$42.25.) Raven Press: New York. 1978.

This is a scholarly work in an area where original work is scattered through a wide range of primary journals and it is beautifully produced, the illustrations including 112 excellent ultramicrograph plates. An important theme is the structural and functional heterogeneity of axons, suggesting a more complex role in signal processing than would be supposed from the conventional view of the axon as a conductor. Interesting recent studies show that sodium channels are more concentrated at nodes of Ranvier and become redistributed after demyelination. The controlling role of the glia and Schwann cells adds another facet to the symbiotic relation between them and the axon, so commonly ignored in studies on peripheral neuropathy in recent years. The editor describes a histochemical marker for the electrogenic membrane at the node of Ranvier, which should be a useful new tool. The evidence that internodal conduction time is not constant in normal fibres, but varies with fibre diameter, is also important.

The 34 contributors are well chosen to present all aspects of the axon from ion-conductance mechanisms to morphology of axon and myelin in health and in disease. There are excellent reviews of immunological and biochemical aspects of axonal diseases of the central and peripheral nervous systems. The biochemical understanding of many genetically determined diseases has advanced rapidly but the same can not be said of acquired diseases. The editor has wisely chosen to let his very distinguished panel present their themes in their own ways, so providing readers with an excellent compendium of the active work on a somewhat neglected aspect of neurobiology.

J. A. SIMPSON

**Clinical Pharmacology of Psychotherapeutic Drugs** By L. E. Hollister. (Pp. 239; illustrated; £11.00.) Churchill Livingstone: Edinburgh. 1978.

The *Clinical Pharmacology of Psychotherapeutic Drugs* is the first volume in the series of monographs in clinical pharmacology. The author, who has had considerable experience in the evaluation of drugs in psychiatry and the application of principles of clinical pharmacology to psychiatry, follows a brief introductory chapter with chapters on anti-anxiety drugs, hypnotics, anti-depressants, antipsychotics, and lithium. Each chapter is a self-contained review of drug use in these different conditions. These chapters accurately reflect current biochemical and pharmacological views on the pathophysiology of mental disease and the mechanism of drug action. This up-to-date presentation would be valuable not only to specialists in neurology and psychiatry but also to those in more general medical practice who use these agents, often on an empirical basis and with little information about the underlying mechanisms of drug action. If I had any criticism it would be that the introduction is rather short and may not prepare the nonclinical pharmacological reader adequately for some aspects of drug disposition and pharmacokinetics which are later discussed.

J. L. REID

**Essays in Neurochemistry and Neuropharmacology** Edited by M. B. H. Youdim, W. Lovenberg, D. F. Sherman, and J. R. Lagnado. (Pp. 228; illustrated; £10.50.) John Wiley and Sons: Chichester. 1978.

This volume is part of a series of articles which are orientated specifically to postgraduate research students and research workers in neurochemistry and neuropharmacology, rather than to the clinician. As it is a collection of essays, the articles are not intended to be related to each other so there is no overall theme, and some will be of greater use to the clinician than others.

The first essay, on feedback regulation of central monoaminergic neurones, gives a critical assessment of the functional importance of complex interrelated autoregulatory mechanisms, but any discussion on the reasons for their existence is avoided as being beyond the scope of the essay. This

seems a pity because the stated objectives of the series include familiarisation of the reader with current specific problems in these neurosciences.

This tends to be one weakness in the articles in this volume—the salient features of the problems are seldom identified and emphasised in a way likely to give the reader a clear perspective. Often there is too little synthesis of concepts, or pointers for future work.

One exception to this is the essay on the importance of the availability of tryptophan to cerebral serotonin. The controversial aspects are critically appraised and a clear personal view is expressed, with reasons, that there is far less real controversy than would appear to be the case from published research papers and reviews. Another is the critical account of the current state of play in the proteins and memory game.

The remaining essays tend in the main to be too detailed and comprehensive at the expense of any clear message or conclusion. It could represent useful background reading for the clinician wishing to keep up with recent developments in certain aspects of neurochemistry and neuropharmacology, were it not for the lack of an index, which is a serious deficiency in any book of this type.

H. S. BACHELOR

**Antiepileptic Drugs: Quantitative Analysis and Interpretation** Edited by C. E. Pippenger, J. Kiffin Penry, and Henn Kutt. (Pp. 367; illustrated; \$38.35.) Raven Press: New York. 1978.

The last few years have seen a flurry of books on epilepsy from Raven Press, many of them hastily compiled from national or international meetings, and therefore with much overlap between them, both of authors and of topics. The present volume was put together from the proceedings of an American national workshop on measurement of antiepileptic drugs held in 1976, and attempts to cover three areas: analytical methods, quality control of laboratory assays, and clinical applications of drug levels. Its contributors are, without exception, North American, and the information given is in many places not suitable for the European reader—sodium valproate, for instance, gets