Notices

Tenth International Symposium on Cerebral Blood Flow and Metabolism

June 19–24, 1981 (amended date)
St Louis, Missouri, USA.

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The Casey Holter Memorial Prize. This prize of £250 will be awarded in 1981 for the best essay reporting original work bearing on the pathogenesis or treatment of spina bifida or hydrocephalus. Entries should be submitted before 30th April 1981 to: Mr D G Young, Royal Hospital for Sick Children, York Hill, Glasgow G3 8SJ.

Book reviews

Ergot Compounds and Brain Function—Neuro endocrine and Neuropsychiatric aspects Edited by M Goldstein *et al* (pp 413; \$46.24.) New York: Raven Press, 1980.

Ergot drugs have been a treasure chest for pharmacologists. Their investigation led to some of the adventures in physiology of Sir Henry Dale and more recently has served as a powerful tool to study the monoamine nervous system. This well edited and presented volume reviews the many pharmacological actions and clinical uses of ergot derivatives. Thirty-nine chapters contain papers by 111 authors presented at a New York symposium in 1979. The index is good, the type clear and the illustrations informative.

There are five main sections. The first contains an excellent review of the diverse pharmacology of ergots by Berde, followed by the presentation of new research findings using techniques such as ibotenic acid lesions of the striatum to remove interneurons but leave extrinsic terminals intact. However, since ergot alkaloids may act at six or more distinct monoamine receptors in the brain, the analysis of these results is sometimes difficult. The book then reviews

the use of ergots in endocrine disorders, Parkinsonism, dyskinesias and old age. These sections draw on the vast experience and publications of many authors and form a useful compendium of present practice in the management of hyperprolactinaemia, acromegaly and extrapyramidal disorders.

Although I enjoyed the book as a whole, there are a number of drawbacks. The first section is complementary to the encyclopaedic handbook on experimental pharmacology of ergot alkaloids and related compounds edited by Berde and Schild and published by Springer-Verlag in 1978. This is three times more expensive than the present volume but an essential reference work. Many of the clinical results are duplicated in both volumes. The necessary decision by Sandoz to stop production and investigation of lysergic acid diethylamide and analogues in the 1960's following widespread abuse unfortunately curtailed the study of the psychotomimetic properties of ergot derivatives in man. This most interesting effect and also the vascular physiology of ergots are well reviewed in the handbook but not in the present volume. This however forms an excellent introduction to many of the different actions of ergot in animals and man.

JD PARKES

Interaction within the Brain-Pituitary-Adrenocortical System Edited by M T Jones, B Gillham, MF Dallman, and S Chattopadhyay (pp 293, £14.80) London: Academic Press, 1979.

This book is based on a satellite symposium of the 5th International Congress on Hormonal Steroids held at Varanasi, India, in November 1978. The authors of the 28 chapters were specifically asked to review their particular field, placing their own results in a broad context. This approach has been so successful that the editors have virtually produced a textbook rather than a collection of papers of limited interest. The content is chiefly experimental with a single chapter by Professor Rees directly relevant to the clinical management of Cushing's syndrome, but other authors consider such topics as adrenocortical function in psychiatric disorders and the possible role of steroids in foetal development and in hypertension.

Notwithstanding the emphasis on lab-

oratory work it is frequently stimulating to relate the results to clinical situations. In a chapter on behavioural effects of neuropeptides for example, Bohus points out that certain behavioural deficits after hypophysectomy in animals are only corrected by replacement therapy with ACTH and endorphins. Professor Edwardson in his contribution suggests a relationship between pituitary peptides and obesity. Perhaps the clinical impression of a change of personality and a tendency to gain weight in patients after hypophysectomy has foundation in hormonal deficiency.

A number of the chapters deal with the regulation of ACTH release and the mechanism of feed back control exerted by circulating steroids. Of particular interest to neurologists is the chapter by Gann and his co-workers who have explored the afferent neuronal pathways originating in the medulla which influence hypothalamic production of a corticotrophin releasing factor (CRF). Their technique involves hormonal measurement acting as the index of response to electrical stimulation of neurones. The neuroendocrine approach by Scapagnini *et al* to noradrenergic inhibition of CRF production has also provided an elegant demonstration of denervation supersensitivity.

The relationship between endocrine and nervous systems is further emphasised by chapters dealing with the role of neuro-transmitters in the control of hormone secretion. Professor Hodges for example, describes the inhibitory effects of acetylcholine and serotonin on CRF production.

Many other contributions illustrate the growing awareness of neuro-endocrinology as a subject of clinical relevance. Indeed ACTH and related peptides seem likely to achieve importance as neuro-transmitters equal to that achieved in their role as hormones. The book is well produced, well illustrated and can be recommended as a source of reference for the general reader as well as the specialist.

NF LAWTON

Myotonic Dystrophy by Peter S Harper (pp 331; £17.25) Eastbourne, England: WB Saunders Co 1979.

Harper's monograph on myotonic dystrophy is excellent. The previous standard reference of Caughey and

Myrianthopoulos was published in 1963, and much has happened since then, particularly in those fields in which this author has special experience. His general review of the disease is based on a personal family study of 170 patients in the USA, while working on genetic linkage in Dr Victor McKusick's Department at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. The chapters on the genetic basis of the disorder, and on preclinical detection and genetic counselling are outstanding, as is the long account of myotonic dystrophy in infancy and childhood which is another of the author's special interests. The monograph is written by one with extensive first hand knowledge of the disease, and an impressive grasp of the literature on the topic. The presentation is pleasing, the text large and easy to read, and there are abundant illustrations of original material. I will keep this monograph on my shelves as the contemporary standard reference work on myotonic dystrophy, and all neurological and general medical libraries should possess a copy.

CD MARSDEN

Pediatric Cerebral Angiography by AJ Raimondi and LJ Cerullo (pp 211; DM120) Stuttgart: George Thieme Verlag, 1980.

Raimondi the principal author of this atlas has long been recognised as a neurosurgeon who has exploited cerebral angiography in the investigation and management of brain disorder from early infancy throughout the paediatric age group. Before the CT era angiography had been accepted as the safest and usually most informative invasive method of investigation, supplanting ventriculography and pneumoencephalography. Raimondi was one of the first to recognise that angiography was safe in infancy and could be used for the investigation of infantile hydrocephalus. It is a pleasure to welcome this atlas illustrated by subtraction radiographs of the highest quality which records Raimondi's unrivalled experience of the subject.

The paediatric neuroradiologist will find illustrated in this book almost every condition he is likely to encounter with the possible exception of herpes encephalitis, an illness which may lead to admission to a neurosurgical ward and in which early diagnosis and the use of new drugs has

improved the prognosis. Each chapter is introduced by a clinical and pathological section which enhances the value of the radiology. There is a selection of excellent references at the end of each chapter. The legends give a very full description of the salient points but the style of some suggests they were composed to be spoken rather than read. Your reviewer was saddened to find the eponym Dandy Walker Cyst relegated to brackets after 'Cystic Transformation of the Fourth Ventricle'. Dandy and Walker were leaders of their generation of neurosurgeons in the USA and Dandy should be known to all neuroradiologists as the first to perform ventriculography and encephalography—the latter a term more acceptable to neuroradiologists than Raimondi's 'pneumoencephalography'. It is now an infrequent examination but no one would embark upon it without the facility for tomography.

These criticisms do not detract from the excellence of this atlas. One is tempted to question the place of such a volume in the CT era when many of the conditions illustrated can be displayed by a noninvasive method and in many centres angiography is used almost exclusively for the investigation of vascular disorders. Those who now lack access to CT are unlikely to produce angiograms which compare with Raimondi's. However his experience of paediatric angiography is now available under one cover. One hopes that in the next edition the editor and publishers will permit him to add matching CT (or other noninvasive) images, for which there would be ample space, and thus make the atlas even more attractive to paediatric neurosurgeons and neuroradiologists.

RD HOARE

The Suicide Syndrome edited by Richard Farmer and Steven Hirsch (pp 268; £14.95) London: Groom Helm, 1980.

This book contains edited versions of 21 papers delivered by invited speakers, most of them British, at a symposium on suicide and parasuicide held at Charing Cross Hospital in October 1978. Most of the papers were interesting to hear and they are still interesting to read. They give an overview of current thought and current work in these related fields. In parasuicide in particular there are inter-

esting accounts of different ways of looking at this all-too-frequent form of behaviour which continues to impose a considerable strain on the medical and psychiatric services in Great Britain. Different approaches to the assessment and the management of patients who have performed an act of self-poisoning or self-injury are also described. Anyone interested in self-poisoning—and that should include all general physicians, psychiatrists and general practitioners—can learn from this book. This makes it all the more unfortunate that the format of the book is so unattractive with no attempt at justification of the typescript.

JL GIBBONS

The Neurobiology of Dopamine edited by A S Horn, J Korf, and B H C Westerink (pp 723; \$83.00) London: Academic Press, 1979.

Research into cerebral dopamine function has been at the forefront of neuropharmacological and neurochemical research for the past decade. The importance of altered brain dopamine function to neurology and psychiatry has been emphasised by its apparent role in movement disorders and schizophreniform illness. *The Neurobiology of Dopamine* has successfully attempted to bring together all aspects of dopamine research under one cover. This work provides a comprehensive insight into this field as a whole and will be of general interest to those working in brain research. The major shortcomings of the volume lie in the generally superficial approach to individual topics and the fact that some of the hypotheses put forward have now been disproved or superseded. But until the present time there has been no volume available to which one could turn for such a complete overview of cerebral dopamine function. It will be invaluable as the reference book for dopamine and as the volume to which research students and research workers entering this field can be pointed to obtain a basic knowledge of dopamine in biological systems. In my opinion *The Neurobiology of Dopamine* will be an asset to all those concerned with nervous system function and its editors are to be congratulated on producing a thoroughly worthwhile addition to the literature.

PG JENNER