

Book reviews

Progress in Neuropathology Volume 4, edited by HM Zimmerman (pp 412; \$51.68). New York: Raven Press, 1979.

Neuropathology is, like other relatively new subspecialties in medicine, often described by publishers as a "rapidly expanding subject", or, as in the description of the series "Progress in Neuropathology", a "fast-moving field". In many branches of medicine this kind of description has become a cliché; in the case of neuropathology however there is a firm basis of truth and the series Progress in Neuropathology has been invaluable to those who wish to keep abreast of new developments. Professor Zimmerman's wide personal experience in neuropathology and his knowledge of related research in the neurosciences is apparent in the general editing of the series and particularly in the very wide selection of topics. The present volume should be considered against the background of the earlier volumes in which many of the basic problems in neuropathology, for example the use of various techniques and of basic pathological reactions, have been covered. In the present volume a wide range of subjects is covered with a generally high standard. The chapters on the morphology of normal and abnormal glial cells and on brain tumours are excellent and give an insight into the newer techniques which can be used to study neoplasia. The chapter on transmission of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease summarises much that has already been published and includes a detailed description of the hamster model. Animal models of virus-induced demyelination are adequately but not comprehensively described, but the selection has been deliberate in that models in which the infection can be studied in its natural host have been selected. The potential use of high-voltage electron microscopy clearly has not been appreciated by many neuropathologists and Hama and Kosaka show something of its value in the study of neuronal and glial structures. The study of the retina and its value as a pure grey matter tissue is illustrated by Goebel and Koppang's chapter on retinal ultrastructure in certain lysosomal disorders.

This volume cannot fail to excite those interested in all branches of the neurosciences and in neuropathology in particular. Perhaps the only mild criticism

might be that the bibliography is predominantly American and occasional important references in the European literature are excluded. With that very minor reservation this volume, and indeed the whole series, is strongly recommended.

IV ALLEN

Neuroendocrinology, edited by DT Krieger and JC Hughes (pp 328; £15.40). Sunderland, Massachusetts: Sinauer Associates, 1980.

A spate of textbooks on neuroendocrinology has appeared during the last two years from both Europe and North America. This volume differs in that it represents a series of articles already published in *Hospital Practice* between 1975 and 1979 up-dated to January 1980. The 34 articles have been rearranged chronologically and divided into six sections dealing with basic physiology and pathology, biological rhythms, fluid balance and eating, behavioural neuroendocrinology, gonadal function and pituitary disorders. Inevitably the result lacks the balanced view appropriate to a textbook suitable for undergraduate and postgraduate students. Articles written for journals tend to reflect the individual views of their authors even though they purport to represent a review of the field. The chapter on transphenoidal pituitary surgery, for example, contains the statement that "the major — perhaps only — cause of acromegaly is a hypersecreting pituitary tumour whose behaviour is not subject to hypothalamic control", whereas the succeeding chapter warns the reader "on the basis of present evidence the pathogenesis of acromegaly cannot be established". It should be said that both these chapters are excellent but the reader must be *au fait* with current controversies in assessing the universal acceptance of an author's conclusions. A further criticism by neurologists might be the absence of chapters dealing with common clinical disorders such as the neurological presentations of thyroid disease. This lack seems to stem from the editorial view that neuroendocrinology encompasses the effects of hormones on the brain but not the effects of hormones on peripheral neuromuscular function. Unfortunately although the book is profusely illustrated the chapters are very sparsely referenced.

The interested reader might prefer to

buy one of the rival textbooks of clinical neuroendocrinology and to refer to *Hospital Practice* for the appropriate article as the need arises. The updating of chapters in this book is not so fundamental that the articles are obsolete.

NF LAWTON

Bromocriptine: A Clinical and Pharmacological Review edited by MO Thorner, E Fluckiger and DB Calne (pp 190; US\$29.92) New York: Raven Press, 1980.

As expected from these authors this is a clear, concise and well presented review of the pharmacology and clinical uses of bromocriptine in both endocrinology and neurology. However, like recordings of Beethoven symphonies, reviews of bromocriptine proliferate and there are at least five competing versions. Which of these to choose? Harper and Simmonds in *Recent Advances in Drug Research*, Volume 12, New York: Academic Press, 1977 offer the best value for money with five different drug reviews on cyclic nucleotides, control of trematode diseases and anti-inflammatory drugs as well as bromocriptine. The journal *Drugs*, Volume 17, 1979 pp 313-424 contains as usual an authoritative if somewhat selective discussion of the uses of bromocriptine. By far the best produced and most stimulating, if not comprehensive account, is to be found in *Acta Endocrinologica*, Supplement 216, 1978 and this would be my second recommendation. Another supplement to the *Medical Journal of Australia* in 1978 was devoted to bromocriptine and contains a brilliant review by Fluckiger of pharmacological aspects and by Besser of neuroendocrinological aspects. The account of bromocriptine in *Ergot Compounds and Brain Function (Advances in Biochemical Psychopharmacology)*, Volume 23, New York: Raven Press, 1980) has many of the drawbacks of published conference proceedings, although a wide scope. Finally, but first recommendation, is *Ergot Alkaloids and Related Compounds*, Volume 49, edited by Berde and Schild (Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 1978), which gives a classic account of this narrow field of bromocriptine alone.

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