This book is the proceedings of a symposium held in Holland in October 1979 and is edited by a neurologist, a neurosurgeon and a radiotherapist. One of the main contributors is JB Posner, who sets out the case for a subspeciality of "Neuro-Oncology", concerned with the diagnosis and treatment of primary and secondary brain and spinal cord tumours, with the non-metastatic disorders and with the relief of pain. There follow papers on diagnosis emphasising CT-scanning, on the different methods of treatment, on complications such as meningeal metastasis, on the side-effects of chemotherapy and on paraneoplastic disorders. DA Bonth, the neurosurgical editor, advocates stereotactic biopsy of brain tumours or resection of the more accessible ones. This is at a time when many British neurologists still debate the correctness of such intervention. D Ash believes that there is benefit from irradiation of cerebral metastases; these may be the only ones in lung cancer. For gliomas Posner reports that if chemotherapy is given as well as local radiotherapy, worthwhile survival is prolonged. Certainly, in Britain we are not enthusiastic about the results of surgery and radiotherapy alone. Radiotherapy for spinal cord compression by metastases is felt by several authors to be as effective as surgery. Immediate steroid therapy should be followed by early high-dosage radiotherapy then a consolidation course. The significance of the blood-brain barrier is discussed by Posner. It may remain intact when metastases are small, protecting them against systemic chemotherapy. He refers to methods of temporarily disrupting the barrier and the risks of doing this. The prophylactic value of intrathecal methotrexate in leukaemia is affirmed. Its intermittent use reduces the risk of producing leukoencephalopathy. Paraneoplastic disorders include a peripheral neuropathy similar to allergic polyneuritis. B Juel-Jensen reviews herpes virus infections in malignancy, his appraisal of antiviral agents being already outdated.

This book therefore contains much of interest and value to those in the neurological sciences and to oncologists. Its main drawbacks are the usual ones of proceedings. It is uneven and repetitive. Papers are not grouped as well as they might be. The scope of contributions ranges from single case reports to broad reviews and their importance varies accordingly. In avoiding delay and courtesy the editors were no doubt obliged to publish the papers unaltered. Nevertheless, some tampering with the material could have meant a more stream-lined, organised work, of wider value and durability. The stage is set for someone, perhaps Posner, to put together a "Textbook of Neuro-oncology".  

SIMON CURRIE


This book is one of a number from the "Wiley Series on Personality Processes". While they are aimed mainly at behavioural scientists, and cover a wide variety of topics from "Infant Development" to "The Structure and Functions of Fantasy", this handbook on neuropsychology is a valuable contribution to the neuropsychological literature. It is divided into five sections and covers a number of areas not often found in neuropsychology texts. The first is devoted to basic concepts, especially regarding brain behaviour relationships and lateralisation of function although it also includes a chapter on the psychology of ageing. Part Two is mainly concerned with clinical issues with interesting reviews of such issues as neurolinguistics and aphasia, memory, alcohol and drug abuse, and epilepsy. The third part is on childhood neuropsychology; and in the fourth, clinical testing is discussed in detail with descriptions of some neuropsychological test batteries such as those developed by Luria and Halstead.

The last part, least interesting and useful for the clinician, discusses such issues as training in neuropsychology, and rehabilitation and treatment issues. It is in this section in particular that the overall American bias will lose the interest of some European readers. While it is possible to struggle with jargon in some earlier sections such as "the cortical contribution to emotion relates the affective-effective dimension to the protocritic-epicritic in such a way that a new dimension, labelled ethical-aesthetic, emerges" (p 118), the value of knowing the administrative arrangements and clinical practices in four different neuropsychological laboratories in America is limiting.

The book is nicely produced, and the price is very good value even for the 642 pages of the first four parts.

MICHAEL TRIMBLE


The antipsychotic drugs have been available for almost 30 years and in that time they have profoundly affected our treatment of the acutely psychotic patient, the relapsing and the chronic schizophrenic. However, usage of these drugs remains unstandardised, with controversy concerning the choice of drug, whether to use normal or high dosage, how to deal with side-effects, and so on. This book aims to "cover basic principles" as well as specific guidelines for the effective and economical application of antipsychotic drug therapy. In this the authors, psychiatrists in Lexington, Kentucky, succeed admirably. Their text is clear, authoritative and based on sound published evidence. They deal with all the difficult problems in the drug management of psychosis such as treating the numerous side-effects. Their recommendations are tempered by compassion for the unfortunate patient. Even the economics of drug prescribing are outlined.

The only weakness in the book is that it concentrates on the drug problems somewhat at what the expense of their therapeutic usage. This is particularly evident in the chapter on lithium in which the clinical pharmacology of lithium is detailed but the therapeutic indications are sketchily outlined. Nor is there any full discussion of when to try stopping lithium. The book is well-written, carefully organised and comprehensive. It is long and detailed but should become the standard text on antipsychotic drugs.

MH LADER