

## Book reviews

**Neurotransmitters, Receptors and Drug Action** Edited by Walter B Essman (pp 209; £17.95) Lancaster: MTP Press Ltd, 1980.

To compile a volume dealing with any aspect of neurotransmitter receptor function within the brain should deter most authors. The concepts governing this field change so rapidly that any book on the subject is by definition out of date before publication. Indeed, *Neurotransmitters, Receptors and Drug Action* has suffered this fate. References quoted seldom are later than 1978 and the ideas put forward, although then current, at times seem to be from the distant past. No blame for this can be attributed to either the editor or authors, rather the long delays suffered by many of us through the process of publication itself must be considered responsible. The volume also contains some strange bedfellows. Chapters deal with a variety of neurotransmitters—acetylcholine, noradrenaline, dopamine, 5HT, GABA and histamine—but each is examined from the particular viewpoint of the individual authors such that the contents do not blend to produce a homogenous work. This might explain the need for the all embracing title used for the volume. Overall, therefore, this is not a book to be recommended for a current view of neurotransmitter receptor function within the brain. At almost £18 I would be surprised if many found it to be of use. Perhaps others contemplating similar volumes would be advised to wait until the instability of receptor theory lessens and the speed of publication improves.

P JENNER

**The Spinal Cord and Its Reaction to Traumatic Injury** Edited by William F Windle (pp 368; SFr 95) New York: Marcel Dekker Inc, 1980.

This book has 16 authors, although it is not the result of a symposium. Chapter 1 is on history. Chapters 2 to 7 are on anatomy and embryology, chapters 8 to 12 on physiology, chiefly microphysiology of the cat, and chapters 13 to 18 on experimental pathology. Chapter 20 is on general pathology, and chapter 19 on early surgical interven-

tion, as practised in the USA, in the management of spinal injuries.

Some chapters review the whole of a natural topic, but some are narrow accounts of the author's research and its immediate background. Human spinal tracts are presented in chapter 5 as if nothing new had been discovered about them since 1938. A whole chapter is devoted to the distribution of GABA-ergic neurones in the rat's spinal cord, but chemical transmitters other than GABA are neglected; noradrenaline is mentioned solely in a context of experimental pathology, and acetylcholine gets no mention at all. I enjoyed Chapter 4, which is an economically written 10-page summary of Dommissé's monograph on the blood supply of the cord, and chapter 17, in which Kao soberly and clearly describes his work on bridging the transected spinal cord with sciatic nerve graft. That such a graft gets invaded by CNS axons is well established and independently confirmed; what happens later remains obscure. This is a patchy book, good in parts, but not one that will greatly help the clinician who deals with spinal injuries.

GS BRINDLEY

**Adaptation et restauration des fonctions nerveuses** By Marc Jeannerod and Henri Hecaen (pp 323; unpriced) Villeurbanne: SIMEP, 1979.

The best way to sum up this book would be to say that if it were in English it would be excellent. Alas, it is in French and I could not recommend it to anyone other than a fluent francophone.

The work itself is a comprehensive and scholarly review comprising 323 pages of closely typed text and listing over 1500 references, the most recent being dated 1978. The subject matter is in two parts. The first deals with the adaptability of the nervous system both in animals and humans. The chapter headings are historical review, sensory deprivation, peripheral motor system, deafferentation, vestibulo-ocular reflex, motor coordination and neuronal basis of learning. The second and larger part of the book deals with the recovery of function after a cerebral lesion in animals and man. The main headings are factors affecting outcome, restoration of visual function, recovery of motor func-

## Book reviews, Correction and Notices

tions, return of language and the anatomical and physiological basis of recovery.

ALAN WHITEHEAD

## Correction

"A technique for anodally blocking large nerve fibres through chronically implanted electrodes" by GS Brindley and MD Craggs, Vol 43, pp 1083-9. Owing to a printers error the legend in fig 1 in this article was incorrect. The original legend read "Implanted electrodes: each implanted electrode-mount consists of a silicone-rubber body with two pairs of parallel channels closed at the top by means of silicone rubber flaps. Each channel of the rostral pair contains three symmetrically placed platinum electrodes (a-b-c), and each channel of the caudal pair contains three asymmetrically placed electrodes (d-e-f). The outer electrodes of each set of three are usually connected together as a common anode. Contact with the electrodes is made through helical wound cables. The nearer channel is ready to receive a nerve whilst the other is shown occupied."

In addition, the lettering to the right of the first trace of figure 6A should have read 0.1 ms, not 0.1 mA as printed.

## Notices

**International Meeting of Neurological Sciences.** This will be held in Bombay, India, 28-30 September 1981. Information may be obtained from Professor Manik Shahani, ECI Institute of Electrophysiology, Dr E Borges Marg Parel, Bombay 400 012, India.

**The Volvo Awards for low back pain research.** The Volvo Company of Göteborg, Sweden is offering three prizes of US\$3000 each for papers submitted on (1) Clinical studies, (2) Bioengineering studies, or (3) Studies in other basic science areas. Details are available from: Professor Alf Nachemson, Sahlgren Hospital, S-413 45, Göteborg, Sweden.