Book reviews

Compared to their colleagues in oto-laryngology, neurosurgeons were slow to appreciate the potential of the surgical microscope, that it might allow a greater delicacy of technique, and perhaps extend the range of the possible. The history of microneurosurgery, that is, surgery as applied to neurosurgery, is relatively short. It is less than 20 years since the first cautious reports, notably by Kurze, illustrating the many ways in which microtechniques might be employed, in chordotony, rhizotomy, nerve anastomosis, and selected intracranial tumour removal. Today the application of these techniques is widespread, if not universal. There is a steadily growing literature on the indications for the microneurosurgical method and concerning the review and elaboration of anatomical detail relevant to the magnified surgical field.

This volume sets out to provide a comprehensive account of the various areas in which microneurosurgical techniques are applied today. Originally based on a Californian symposium, this second edition is a greatly expanded work, with a large number of contributors, some already well known in their field. As in the first edition there are competent introductory chapters on the surgical microscope, and on essential instrumentation. Throughout the work there are contributions on regional microneurosurgical anatomy—of the sellar region, the internal auditory meatus, the jugular foramen and the circle of Willis—and though many of the illustrations are familiar from earlier publication, they provide a valuable complement to the surgical texts. Of these texts it can be said that there is some variation in their style and in the attention paid to the various topics. The several approaches to the pituitary gland receive extended treatment, transfrontal, subnasal and transnasal transphenoidal routes all being described in detail, with many excellent illustrations. For the problem of the acoustic neuroma however a description of the suboccipital transmeatal operation of Rand-Kurze is the essence of the presentation, and a related chapter on temporal bone surgery seems inappropriately brief. Again it must be unusual in a discourse on the surgery of trigeminal neuralgia to recommend solely the transcortical approach for nerve section, and to make no assessment of the posterior fossa route for comparison. On the important problem of cerebral aneurysm surgery the contribution is disappointing, the illustration inadequate, and the whole of little practical value to initiates in the art. They will gain more from the chapter on microvascular surgery, which describes some basic laboratory training techniques and from the following one on vascular bypass for occlusive cerebrovascular disease. For those who engage in peripheral nerve surgery there are four chapters on all aspects of nerve injury and repair. There is also a contribution on tissue transplantation and replantation by microvascular anastomosis.

This well produced volume has many attractive features. In particular the collection of beautifully reproduced detailed anatomical presentations by AL Rhoton adds greatly to the value of the work. Of the surgical contributions some are outstanding, for their concise style, clear description of operative procedures and carefully chosen illustrations. Unfortunately all are not equally valuable, because they are not comprehensive, or are inadequately illustrated, or occasionally because they adopt a wordy conversational style, filled with personal reminiscence, which can be read with interest only once. Some unevenness is difficult to avoid in a multiple author work, but clearer editorial direction might have helped, and even eliminated the inexplicable chapters on audiometry and neuroradiology of the cerebello-pontine angle. More attention might have been given to offering guidance on learning techniques, for as stated in Chapter one considerable practice must be gained in the laboratory, acquiring the varied skills of microdissection, if the surgeon is to provide proper care for his patients. I suspect that the availability of this volume will be limited by its price.

JJ Maccabie

The suppression of experimental allergic encephalomyelitis and multiple sclerosis By AN Davison, ML Cuzner (pp 255; £14.80) London: Academic Press, 1980. Multiple sclerosis is a tantalising condition. Its histology indicates an aggressive immunological reaction which leads to the reasonable expectation that the disease could be prevented or treated and patients helped. This reasonably priced book publishes the proceedings of a meeting of the Multiple Sclerosis Society held in October 1979 in memory of Dr Liversedge. Despite helpful chapters by "pure" immunologists it is a book for the initiated. We learn from Paterson that experimental allergic encephalomyelitis (EAE) can be transferred by the supernatant from incubated lymph node cells. This was somewhat surprising because EAE had been regarded as a T cell mediated disease. We still await identification of the chemical nature of the transferring factor. The enormous research in sequencing myelin basic proteins and identifying their encephalitogenic determinants in different species is summarised by Eylar. Hashim summarises evidence that EAE can be prevented and treated with a peptide which is not encephalitogenic. Other methods of treatment of EAE with basic amino acid polymers, with basic protein itself and with polyunsaturated fatty acids are also described in different chapters. Despite allegedly similar changes in the fluctuation of T cells which stick to erythrocytes unusually quickly in both EAE and multiple sclerosis (MS), the convincing immunological similarity between the two conditions has been demonstrated. One argument not emphasised anywhere in the book is that the antigen for chronic relapsing EAE has not been identified but does not appear to be myelin basic protein. Research for that antigen followed by suitable immunological tests in MS would seem appropriate. The book progresses logically to a consideration of treatment.