International Society for Neurochemistry and the main purpose was stated as the exploration of the contributions of neurochemical research to understanding problems in clinical neurology. There is little evidence from the publication of any dialogue between clinicians and scientists—there is no record of discussions which may have taken place after the formal contributions had been given. Nevertheless, within those limitations, the quality of the contributions is high and the book provides a good up-to-date account of current biochemical knowledge and of the contributions neurochemists could make to neurology. The papers were submitted as camera-ready material thus giving the editors little scope for editing. I find the absence of summaries a great disadvantage although the editors have obviously encouraged their authors to end their contributions with comments on future developments and perspectives. The index is only partly useful—it seems to have been compiled from key words supplied by the authors and each item in the index does not refer to the pages on which it appears but to the first page of that article in which it appears. Many interesting aspects are not listed in the index. This is a pity because the wealth of good information available in this compilation is not easily extracted without reading right through each chapter. In current times this is often impossible; the reader may well prefer to use such a source for reference purposes. This type of publication is unfortunately increasing. It is relatively straightforward to gather together a group of eminent, interesting speakers who provide equally interesting manuscripts. It is much more arduous to provide the reader with the standard means of getting full value—good summaries and a thorough index. One wonders when publishers will get the message that such books would prove so much more useful if this were done—perhaps their marketability as well?

HS BACHELARD

Clinical Neurosis By Philip Snaith (pp 227; £6.95) Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981.

Although the new American psychiatric classification (DSM-III) strenuously laboured to omit the term “neurosis,”

the label will nevertheless outlive its obituarists, as witnessed by this book. Neurosis is so vast an area that definite review would be a Herculean task. This modest paperback book is a useful introduction to some aspects of the subject, especially on depressive neurosis, anorexia nervosa and self-regulatory modes of treatment. It gives conventional accounts of the main neuroses and their treatments, drawing on published work until 1979. For post-graduates reading in the area this text is a handy start, though far from being comprehensive. In particular, behavioural psychotherapy is skimpily dealt with. The predominant method of exposure in vivo for the reduction of phobias and compulsive rituals is mentioned only in passing, and the treatment of sexual skills training is not adequately described. Anxiety control training is given rather more space than is warranted by the absence of controlled studies testifying to its value and curious prescriptions are sometimes offered without evidence to back them up; eg that for anorexia nervosa psychotherapy “should be carried out by a psychiatrist or clinical psychologist and should last for at least an hour each week.” Inevitably there are errors, as on p20, where it is stated incorrectly that “many patients with animal phobias do in fact have a later age of onset of their neurosis,” or on page 99 obsessive-compulsive disorder the less good the prospect of ultimate recovery, a point which does not hold for recovery with exposure in vivo. The book should be made available for all libraries.

ISAAC MARKS

Examination of the Child with Minor Neurological Dysfunction 2nd edn Edited by Bert CL Touwen (pp 134; £7.00) London: Spastics International Medical Publications, 1979.

Dr Touwen is concerned about the minimal cerebral dysfunction (maximal neurological confusion) controversy and rightly so. His skill is to describe meticulously the conduct of a good neurological examination of children. His concern is to describe and to grade objective, reproducible but minor neurological signs and few practising paediatric neurologists would disagree with his description except in details. Thus

the book is very useful for any doctor training in the skills of paediatric neurology, particularly after reading the expanded discussion in this edition. The lack of normative data relating to his tests weakens the usefulness of the tests though this is defended in the text. The argument that performance is considerably influenced by cultural and social factors to such an extent that local norms are necessary is justifiable though his own findings in his population would have been fascinating. It is doubtful whether his test, which occupies 10 pages of text, is actually used as it stands in daily work, not only because of its length but also because he includes the physical features of such a range of frank neurological disorders. The book describes the examination of the child with neurological disease to a greater extent than might be anticipated from the title. The testing has been used effectively in controlled studies of apparently healthy children (for example with febrile convulsions) but most workers are likely to use a shorter battery.

Where the book is less helpful is in the area of examination which causes the paediatric neurologist and school medical officer most difficulty. He describes this as the “Syndrome consisting of the absence of a syndrome.” What of the child whose individual minor signs are inconsistent within the one child, though each is in itself reproducible? What of the child who shows few of his minor signs yet cannot tie his laces or ride a bicycle? What of the child who shows marked minor signs but who functions adequately in everyday tasks? There are children who make neat drawings and atrocious writing, adequate musicians who can't catch a ball, others have a marked articulatory dyspraxia but no other dyspraxic features. Which, if any of these, should be described as clumsy children? There is no answer to such questions at present yet these are the difficult problems for experienced practitioners. Clearly the temperament, past experience and daily management of a child will affect the behavioural profile of that child. Motivation and practice vary so widely that a given minor neurological dysfunction may or may not give rise to practical difficulty. Touwen recognises these problems and this is a strength of his book. This is