

there is perhaps a tendency to an overdidactic approach. A number of the techniques and procedures described, such as fascicular repair, the management of brachial plexus injuries and the treatment of pain by electrical stimulation or acupuncture, are as yet not fully evaluated.

PK THOMAS

**The Science and Practice of Clinical Medicine. Vol 5 "Neurology"** Edited by Roger N Rosenberg (pp 718; £22.20) New York: Grune & Stratton. Distributed in UK by Academic Press, London, 1980.

This book, edited by Dr Rosenberg, an eminent neurologist, is one of the volumes of the series "The Science and Practice of Clinical Medicine". The book is multi-author and expert, with contributors drawn from most of the well-known universities and medical centres of the USA. It is a straightforward book with few idiosyncrasies, well printed and reasonably illustrated. The case for writing a monograph or producing a multi-author expert work on a relatively circumscribed subject, giving the current state of theory, practice and ideas on, say, Jakob-Creutzfeld disease or muscle disease, is self-evident. The argument for producing a new text-book is less obvious. There has been a considerable increase in the understanding of the scientific basis of neurology in the fields of neurochemistry, neuropharmacology, neuroimmunology and neurobiology. The editor's aim is to produce a review of these new developments, and the revolutionary use of computerised scanning, within the format of a standard type of text-book. There are some strange omissions: for example the Glasgow coma scale is advocated but there is no mention of the workers who formulated it; benign intracranial hyperten-

sion does not seem to appear at all, neither in the text, nor in the index; the only reference to normal pressure hydrocephalus appears to be as part of the differential diagnosis of Parkinson's syndrome; a table lists "Common and Treatable Causes of Dementia" and the first example is Huntington's Chorea and on the first page of this table, ten out of thirteen causes of dementia are in fact untreatable.

On the whole the book is good but existing books and monographs probably fulfil the same function and the advantage of monographs is that they should be more easily up-dated. Nevertheless the book contains much of interest with a comprehensive list of chapters including neuroradiology for the clinician, and a useful chapter on drug abuse and nervous system toxins. Within the limitations mentioned, the book is recommended for students and physicians.

LS ILLIS

**Aging and Mental Disorders. Psychological Approaches to Assessment and Treatment** By Steven H Zarit (pp 454; \$19.95) New York: The Free Press, 1980.

"Sir, a woman's preaching is like a dog walking on his hind legs. It is not done well; but you are surprised to find it done at all."

The reader might well echo Dr Johnson's sentiments when faced with this book. The flysheet tells us that this book is intended for "all psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, gerontologists, psychiatric nurses and students working with the elderly." Indeed, the topics covered are catholic in the extreme, including basic ageing processes; biological, psychological and social; psychopathology and assessment covering all physical and psychiatric disorders and a final section on treatment

including not only psychological and social therapies, but also "Treatment of Brain Disorders."

How does the author do it? By selection and inclusion of many references culled from a wide number of sources and a compressed style in which quoted sources appear to reveal undisputed truths. The number of references quoted is remarkable, but one is left in some doubts as to whether the author can see the wood for the trees.

The clinical aspects of the book are also over-inclusive on one hand, taking in the whole field of depression and omitting more recent work relevant to the borderland between depression and dementia, and failing to review the genuine diagnostic problems which lead to such frequent and tragic mistakes as failing to diagnose old age depression states. The review of organic states also suggests an unfamiliarity with the clinical problems and few would be helped in diagnosing acute confusion by the presence of "connotative language changes."

Though the scope covered by the book is wide ranging, it is unselective, failing to differentiate the most important issues, incomprehensible to a beginner in the field and of little help to clinicians seeking further clarification of their older patient's illnesses.

K BERG

## Correction

In the paper "Toxic substances and the nervous system: the role of clinical observation" by Dr Pamela M Le Quesne (JNNP 1981; 44:1-8) Mr A Brown was incorrectly referred to as a member of the Developmental Neurobiology Unit at Carshalton. Mr Brown is attached to the Medical Research Council Laboratories at Carshalton.