Progress in Clinical Neurophysiology, Vol 9 Motor Unit Types, Recruitment and Plasticity in Health and Disease. Edited by JE Desmedt. (Pp 416; \$88.75.) Basel: S Karger, 1981.

This book is the latest in an expensive series of volumes covering topics in clinical electrophysiology. In this volume there are five chapters dealing with motor unit anatomy and mechanical properties, recruitment, firing patterns and plasticity in health and disease. Each chapter contains a number of articles written by different authors.

The main failing of books of this sort is that they fall into a no-mans-land between being a useful collection of organised and collated articles written by experts dealing formally with various aspects of a given topic and a collection of separate papers that might have been delivered at a scientific symposium dealing with the same topics. Such books easily become receptacles for articles containing new data that have not been subject to the usual process of critical review. This is a growing but regrettable trend in scientific publishing epitomised by a number of currently available popular attractively produced moderately priced monthly pseudo magazine-journals. This book contains a number of articles unlikely to be accepted for publication elsewhere.

The first chapter starts with an excellent review by E Kugelberg on the anatomy and physiology of motor units. This is a good read for clinical electromyographers. The next chapter deals with spinal mechanisms underlying motor unit recruitment. Appropriately it begins with an intentionally personal account by E Henneman of the ideas that led to the formulation of his size principle. According to this scheme Henneman seeks to explain motor unit recruitment in terms of differences in anatomical size of motoneurons. Experimental evidence is set out to support this view. This is followed by a critical appraisal of these ideas by RE Burke who discusses motor unit recruitment not only in terms of the factors intrinsic to motoneurons themselves but also in terms of a number of features related to the organisation of central synaptic input to the cells and Occam's razor. In a long article JE Desmedt reproduces his last four years of published work on motor unit recruitment. This is a great convenience.

VR Edgerton and S Cremer summarise what they could find out about changes in muscle fibre properties and training and

include some useful pointers for the selection of racehorses. In another long article JE Desmedt describes some new observations in clinical emg using spike triggered display. This is an excellent and comprehensive article opening up new ground. It should be read by all interested in clinical electromyography.

In summary this book contains a useful collection of articles, some old, some new, some critical, some simply a review. It will undoubtedly find its way onto the desk of most students of motor unit physiology if only because it contains such a convenient source of articles and references expressing the views held by major investigators in this field.

JA STEPHENS

Spinal and Supraspinal Mechanisms of Voluntary Motor Control and Locomotion. Edited by JE Desmedt. (Pp 373; SFr 138, \$82.75, DM 165.) Basel: S Karger, 1980.

This book is the latest in the series "Progress in Clinical Neurophysiology", and is a companion volume to the earlier "Cerebral Motor Control in Man". It consists of a collection of twenty-one review articles discussing new methodology (for example, spike-triggered averaging) and new non-invasive techniques for human study of spinal reflex circuitry. H-reflex testing of reciprocal and recurrent inhibition, effects of muscle vibration on motor control, and the programming of muscle activity in posture and locomotion are all included. However, there seems to have been considerable delay between publication and sending the book for review, with the result that most of the articles now appear to have been written originally some four or more years ago. Since most of the authors have used their articles to summarise and expand their previous work, one is, in fact, in many cases, reading about work published in 1976 and 1977.

Despite this unaccountable time lapse, it is a measure of how good the individual contributions are, that this book is still an enormously useful source of reference for anyone working in the field, and an excellent summary of some of the current areas of research for those outside it. As usual, Professor Desmedt has persuaded most of the best-known workers in each field to contribute, and although much of the data has been published elsewhere, the scope of critical discussion allowed in book format (at the expense of experimental detail, which is available in the original publica-

tions) has been used well by all the writers. Because of this, reviews are probably the best guide to each author's view of the subject that is easily available and as evidence of this, these articles are, and will be, quoted many times in future publications. It is a shame, therefore, that the publishers should so over-price the book as to make it inaccessible to most individual buyers. Indeed, the cost of all nine volumes in the series puts them out of reach of many libraries, who may argue, and rightly so, that first priority should go to new work rather than to collections of even the best review articles.

J ROTHWELL

Movement Disorders (Neurology 2 of Butterworths International Medical Reviews). Edited by C David Marsden and Stanley Fahn. (Pp 379; £15.00) London: Butterworth Scientific, 1982.

The student of Parkinson's disease and related movement disorders has the choice of a baffling number of recent texts to consult. "Advances in", "Current Concepts in" and "Research Progress in" are but three sitting on my shelves at this moment. They are all good in their way, but those relaying the proceedings of meetings are seriously hampered by the often hasty way in which material is collected and presented; it is inevitable that literary style and any attempt at lasting scholarship are often sacrificed.

By contrast, Marsden and Fahn, two internationally respected authorities, have succeeded in presenting a text which seems to have been prepared with care and forethought. The book is a collection of essays on topics selected for their practical importance or because sufficient new work has justified a definitive discussion. Such is their aim. To achieve it, they have chosen expert contributors from the USA, the UK and from Finland and Japan.

The first half is devoted to Parkinsonism. It includes chapters on aetiology, pathology, neurotransmitters and more clinical sections on depression and dementia, fluctuations in disability and treatment with dopamine agonists. Variations, notably multiple system atrophy are ably discussed. The second half deals in the main with tardive and other dyskinesias, myoclonus and the many types of dystonia.

Each half of the book is preceded by an editorial introduction to the subjects to be discussed. These remarks are of interest, for they allow the contributors to provide