Head Injuries (An Integrated Approach). Edited by TAR Dinning and TJ Connelley. (Pp 266; £6.75.) Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 1981.

The prospect of reading another Conference Proceeding—even on such an important topic such as head injuries—did not excite enthusiasm. Yet I found enough in this volume to make it rewarding reading. It is based upon a meeting held in Sydney in 1979 which was focussed on the social and administrative problems of head injury, rather than the biological effects or the clinical management of its early consequences. This bias is reflected in the content of its four component workshops, which correspond to four chapters in the book: incidence, causes and prevention; first aid, retrieval, and emergency treatment; sequelae and rehabilitation; and compensation and legislation. The content and quality of the individual contributions (33 in all) vary. Some are short abstracts and practically worthless but others are wide-ranging and penetrating reviews. Many reiterate conventional views and for clinicians the most interesting and novel contributions are probably those from other professions. Particularly illuminating are those presenting the legal viewpoint—both academic and judicial; these highlight how unfitting, expensive, and even absurd it is to depend upon litigation as a basis for determining the compensation of accident victims. The discussions that followed each workshop were clearly “lively” and their inclusion helps to convey a sense of the vitality of the occasion. There is also a sense of purpose; the task of the conference was to make recommendations aimed at reducing the suffering and loss that are caused by head injury. These conclude each chapter and are also incorporated in a final summary which reflects the masterly touch of the judicial mind. The recommendations are clear, pragmatic, and practical and deserve to be read and adopted far beyond the Australian continent.

G TEASDALE

Studies in Cerebrovascular Disease. Edited by Carlo Loeb. (Pp 211; Price unstated.) Milan, Masson Italia Editori, 1981.

This book is made up of twelve articles written by authors from France, Italy, West Germany, and the United States, covering a variety of topics in the cerebrovascular

disease area. In places the English is difficult to understand but we must be impressed by, and grateful to our European colleagues for their ability to communicate in English, making their works and thoughts available to those, like myself, who have failed to acquire an adequate grasp of any other language.

There is no particular theme to the topics and, in general, those that review a particular area without presenting too much original work are the most successful. The chapters on “thalamic” pain, the connection between epilepsy and cerebrovascular disease, and thalamic aphasia and neglect were particularly interesting and contained many references to the European literature which are not often quoted by English or American authors. This book contains something for most neurologists, particularly for those interested in cerebrovascular disease. I doubt if many individuals would want to buy it but it certainly should be available in libraries.

CP WARLOW

Chronic Low Back Pain. Edited by Michael Stanton-Hicks and Robert A Boas. (Pp 248; \$34.00.) New York: Raven Press, 1982.

This multiple author book is a very mixed affair. Its subject probably makes this inevitable, for in addition to the problems of contributions which are of uneven quality and which partly duplicate each other, which must afflict any multiple author book, any discussion of low back pain involves other difficulties. There is no agreed approach to the subject and many experts have not organised their thoughts about back pain in any coherent and systematic fashion.

The first and last chapters of this volume are excellent. They are on the epidemiology of low back pain and on alternative neurosurgical approaches respectively. The latter chapter, by Professor HA Williamson, is a delight to read, showing the interaction between a thoughtful mind and considerable clinical experience. The chapter on facet joint injections and a brief note on concepts of pain, contain some useful information. Otherwise this book is a disappointment, and much of the material it contains is either commonplace or is couched in a style of English which makes

it difficult to understand. Some chapters are strange. For instance the chapter on the Diagnosis of Low Back Pain is largely devoted to ankylosing spondylitis and Reiter's syndrome—surely rather infrequent causes of back pain in the experience of most clinicians.

RS MAURICE-WILLIAMS

Low Level Lead Exposure: Clinical Implications of Current Research. Edited by HL Needleman (Pp 322; \$46.24.) Raven Press, New York: 1981.

Like many books on problem orientated research, this one is biased—towards demonstrating that excess lead in the environment is damaging to the nervous system. Unfortunately the evidence is unconvincing that it is the low level of lead (40-60 µg%) in the blood that is responsible and the alternative, that children of lesser intelligence and poorer background tend to push more things into their mouths and thus absorb more lead, is not given any consideration by the authors. The arguments that minor involvement of the pathways of haem synthesis, insufficient even to give detectable anaemia, could damage the nervous system is specious and depends on false analogies. It is true that large doses of lead *in vivo* and lesser amounts of lead *in vitro* will affect a number of metabolic pathways related to transmitter synthesis, but the uncritical account of Silberberg of this problem provides only ammunition for the lobbyists and does not seek for a fair judgement of the relevance of any of the findings. Only two articles in this book stand out as making any serious attempt to assess the data scientifically, by Michaelson on nutritional factors, and by Mullenix on behavioural responses. The former comes to the conclusion that so important are nutritional factors in the production of any experimental changes in animals, that because this has been in great part overlooked by previous workers, much of the experimental data so far is virtually worthless. The latter finds that careful behavioural testing of rats previously dosed in infancy with a relatively high dose (1%) in the water showed neither hypo- nor hyperactivity. Only very sophisticated, detailed motor activity studies can show mild changes, not present at lower doses.

This is a disappointing book, but should be read so that the false arguments and fallacious analogies can be spotted. My copy