receptor multiplicity proposed. Perhaps the most novel and most interesting of the chapters contained in this volume are the small mainly philosophical works included throughout the volume which deal with future approaches and strategies to research in the central nervous system. Although short, the views expressed by Costa, Carlsson, Bunney and Bloom give considerable insight into the direction that research might take and the problems it will face in future.

In conclusion, a patchy book not dealing with any subject in particular, but which will no doubt find its place on many library shelves.

PETER JENNER


This is the best account to date of the genetics of epilepsy. It developed from a symposium held in Minnesota which was intended to stimulate collaborative research between clinicians, whose prime responsibility must be to evaluate patients, and geneticists, biologists and epidemiologists who need to consider the difficult methodology of polygenic inheritance.

For those clinicians who seek the recurrence risks for various types of epilepsy, this book will probably provide an answer but only after a diligent search. One is left with the difficulty of assessing whether the risk is appropriate to the patient under consideration and there is no mention of the additional risks caused by anticonvulsant medication. The best clinical chapters are those by Doose on photogenic epilepsy, Tsuboi on febrile convulsions and Annegers and Janz, with co-workers, on generalised seizures. Neonates and adolescents are equally well catered for. These authors give comprehensive and authoritative accounts which most neurologists will find useful. The chapter on family studies of epilepsy by Anderson, puts the data into perspective and highlights the pitfalls of interpretation.

A good deal of the book is concerned with a discussion of alternative genetic models, twin studies and other basic considerations of interest, mainly, to research workers but rather heavy going for the neurologist. Even if there is only time for a rapid perusal of the book it is hoped that the small subsection on “kifafa”, which describes a Tanzanian isolate with epilepsy provoked by photic stimulation, and the splendidly humorous chapter by Murphy, entitled “muddling, meddling and modelling” will catch the eye. A more prolonged perusal is of course recommended.

M BARAITSER


This volume contains the collected papers presented at a Symposium on Shunts and Problems in Shunts held in Marseilles in June 1980, 25 years after the first use of valves in the treatment of ventricular dilatation. Almost every aspect of problems connected with the removal of cerebrospinal fluid has been covered and, fortunately or unfortunately, there have not been so many advances in the last two years that the papers have become outdated. Naturally, some are more informative than others, but the standard is generally high and there is something to be learnt from this material by everyone involved in the management of hydrocephalus. Unfortunately, there is no index, which reduces the value of the book as a source of reference.

As Dr Rougerie says in his preface, it is important not to regard the insertion of a shunt as a minor or routine procedure. One must be aware of the risks and complications that may follow a decision to operate, and to consider the type of procedure and the form of shunt which is suitable for each individual. The range of problems in the management of shunts seems to become greater rather than smaller with the passage of time, but infection remains the major one. Computed tomography has helped in the evaluation of shunt function and dependency, but there is still room for improvement in the functional assessment of these systems, particularly in relation to pressure measurement and cerebrospinal fluid flow.

The book is well produced with clear tables and illustrations, and there is no better source for information on this subject than this volume. It should be available, not only to paediatricians and neurosurgeons, but also to neurologists and general paediatric surgeons—indeed to all those who are concerned with the management of cerebrospinal fluid shunts.

PETER H SCHURR


This book forms volume 20 in the Raven Press Series on aging; it attempts to analyse the aging phenomena in the nervous system at molecular and cellular levels. While this is a commendable aim it will be clear to readers that this is, at present, an unattainable prospect. The book is divided into six sections consisting of 25 chapters. The first part relates to cellular mechanisms of aging in the nervous system. There are interesting accounts of the role of glial cells in CNS aging, of changes in messenger RNA, of trophic factors in the retina, and of modifications in the muscle of the iris, in various species. Aging phenomena in membranes and in the cyto-skeleton, including the filamentous proteins of the neurons, occupy four subsequent chapters and the third section is concerned with evidence for age effects in neuro-transmitter systems. This section contains data on the human brain from Bowen’s laboratory in London. Receptor mechanisms themselves received attention, particularly in relation to cholinergic, dopaminergic, opiate, and GABA receptor functions. The final two parts of the book are concerned with clinical correlates brain aging in man, both in relation to neurofibrillary changes and cholinergic receptors. There is an interesting and important chapter in pyruvate dehydrogenase complex and its possible relation to choline acetyl transferase deficiency in dementia.

This book is very much a research monograph. It has, clearly, been produced rapidly, and suffers from its presentation having been printed direct from typescript of varying characters. It will be useful to research workers, but not to clinicians.

MICHAEL SWASH