epilepsy?, The different types of epileptic seizure, The causes of epilepsy, The first seizure and the investigation of epilepsy, Treatment, Longterm outlook, Living with epilepsy—practical points, Febrile convulsions, The promise of the future. His chapter on Living with Epilepsy comes nearest to dealing with many of the questions raised by the Laidlaws.

Both books are aimed at patients and their relatives, the former is best for dispersing their anxieties, the latter for providing more detailed factual information about the disorder. Indeed the latter could be read with profit by any physician looking for a concise account of epilepsy and its treatment. The books complement each other and can be warmly recommended.

EH REYNOLDS

Organization in the Spinal Cord—The Anatomy and Physiology of Identified Neurones. By AG Brown. (Pp 238; \$77.30, DM 170.) Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 1981.

The relationship between structure and function lies at the heart of classical physiology. This book is a summary of the most recent and elegant example of this approach to the neuronal organisation of the spinal cord. Dr Brown and his colleagues at Edinburgh have been pioneers in perfecting the technique of injecting and staining electrophysiologically identified afferent fibres and cell bodies, and they have collected the results of the past six years into this volume. There is a profusion of beautiful diagrams and photographs of stained neurons and although the great majority have been published elsewhere, it is only when they are brought together that the full impact of the diversity and specificity of their types becomes clear.

This book is not a survey of the field as it stands at present: it is a monograph devoted to the results of one group. Other workers are mentioned, but only in passing and some differences in results are glossed over rather quickly. Nevertheless, there is an enormous amount of information here. There are two main sections to the book. The first deals with cutaneous afferents and the spinocervical tract cells, describing the pattern of termination of the various classes of receptor fibres within the dorsal horn. A useful summary chapter describing the general features of dorsal horn organisation marks the end of this section. The rest of the book is devoted to muscle afferent fibres and the

morphology of their terminations in the intermediate zone and mononeuron pool. The section is completed by a detailed anatomical analysis of Ia contacts with stained motoneurons, which provides remarkable confirmation of structure deduced from electrophysiological experiments. A short appendix describes the details of the methods used.

This is a striking, but expensive, book which should ensure that the results of these careful neuroanatomical studies reach the wide audience they deserve.

J ROTHWELL

Neurofibromatosis (Von Recklinghausen Disease) Genetics, Cell Biology and Biochemistry. (Advances in Neurology, Vol. 29.) Edited by Vincent M Riccardi and John J Mulvihill. (Pp 302; \$40.12.) New York: Raven Press, 1981.

Raven Press has attracted a deserved reputation for publishing the proceedings of excellent conferences in their Advances in Neurology series. Many have become standard reference works, for example, in my own field, Volumes 1 and 23 on Huntington's disease, Volume 14 on dystonia, and Volume 26 on cerebral hypoxia. Volume 29 on neurofibromatosis may fall into the same category, at least as an extensive source to contemporary scientific approaches to this condition. It reports the proceedings of a workshop held under the auspices of the National Cancer Institute, the National Neurofibromatosis Foundation, and the Baylor College of Medicine Neurofibromatosis Program to commemorate the centenary of von Recklinghausen's description, a translation of which is appended. A recurring theme throughout the book is the lack of agreed criteria for the diagnosis of the condition (how many café-au-lait spots are required?). Be that as it may, figures for incidence of 1 per 3000 live births and for prevalence of 30 per 100 000 are suggested, making this one of the commonest single gene disorders affecting the nervous system. Some 15 to 20 000 people are affected by the disease in the UK. Benign tumours become malignant in some 3-5% of individuals, 12% become epileptic, and at least 10% exhibit mental retardation. Eldridge marshals substantial evidence to suggest that neurofibromatosis consists of at least two distinct genetic diseases, the classical peripheral form and a central form characterised by bilateral acoustic neuromas and elevated levels of

nerve growth factor (as estimated by serum radio-immunoassay). The clinical features and pathology of the disease are dealt with briefly, but one of the editors, Vincent Riccardi, recently has published an extensive clinical account in *The New England Journal of Medicine* 1981;305: 1617-27. The bulk of the present book concerns neurobiology relevant to neurofibromatosis. In particular, the regulation of neural crest development and growth factors affecting the nervous system receive considerable attention, so this volume probably will appeal more to the research worker than to the clinician. Its publication reflects the media impact of the rediscovery in print and film of the Elephant Man so vividly recorded for posterity by Sir Frederick Treves in 1923. Now an association for patients with neurofibromatosis has been formed in the UK and anyone interested has been invited to write to Mrs Trish Green, 14 Willow Way, Sherfield on Loddon, Basingstoke, Hampshire.

CD MARSDEN

Manual of Spinal Surgery. By DHR Jenkins, RD Weeks, AYC Yau, RR Du. (Pp 106; £15.00.) Sevenoaks: Butterworths, 1981.

This brief guide to the surgery of the spine has been written by two orthopaedic surgeons and a neurosurgeon. A third orthopaedic surgeon has illustrated it with a large number of line drawings which are clear, helpful and relevant to the text. Only the surgery of the skeletal structures of the spine is covered. Intradural operations (with the exception of lumbar rhizotomy and the transdural removal of large central disc protrusions) are not described, and thus the book will be of more interest to orthopaedic surgeons than to neurosurgeons and neurologists. The prime purpose of the book appears to be to provide a guide to the techniques of carrying out standard operations on the spine. In this it undoubtedly succeeds. The text is clear, crisp and succinct, although, as in any surgical manual there are bound to be certain points which will not meet with universal agreement. The present reviewer would dispute that Cloward's operation cannot be carried out at the C 3/4 level, and that the prone position is more satisfactory than the lateral for the removal of unilateral lumbar disc protrusions.

Unfortunately an otherwise excellent book has been spoilt by an arrangement of