
Stress is a word that deserves to be abolished in scientific circles for it has lost any specific meaning it ever possessed. It can variously describe the cause, nature and response in biological systems and so it is not surprising that its use without prior definition will only confuse. Goldberger and Breznitz recognise this handicap in their introduction but their contributors largely fail to take up its implications. It is only when the cause and manifestations of stress are intrinsically bound together (which is rare) that it is worthwhile using the term. Otherwise the languages of psychology and psychosomatic medicine are more than able to describe the perception of and reaction to noxious stimuli much less ambiguously. I would therefore like to think that this tome is an obituary to stress. A magnificent obituary it is too, for it includes chapters by most of the alumni of the subject, including Selye, Ebstein, Lazarus, Mandler, Meichenbaum, Spence, Rosenman and the Dohrenwends. They tackle their impossible subject with commendable will and there is great erudition in their writings. Most of the chapters deal with past work and a third of them. Only the cognitive aspects are alive and well and these may go some way towards explaining the great variation in response to individual stressors. Apart from this we read with nostalgia of an era that has now come to an end with the recent death of Hans Selye, and look back at a subject that is an important part of the history of medicine, but which should be quietly and firmly laid to rest.

PETER TYRER


Dr Halliday and his colleagues and co-authors are to be congratulated on this clear and helpful guide to the increasingly important and complex field of evoked potential recording and analysis. It is a "proper book" rather than a collection of papers of disparate viewpoint, and generally represents the Queen Square view. There is a particularly practical and helpful chapter on stimulating techniques and recording problems by Kriss, and Halliday's chapters on the visual evoked potential in normality and disease contain a clearer exposition of the components and distribution of the normal and abnormal generators and waves than I have seen before. Two examples are the explanation of the apparently ipsilateral distribution of the major positivity, and the distinction between real conduction delay and apparent delay caused by a central scotoma.

Similarly, there is an excellent discussion of the numerous clinical applications in electro-oculography (Ikeda) and electrocardiography (Gibson) and central auditory potentials (Robinson and Rudge).

Recording techniques and the generation of evoked potentials are fully described, but the separate contributions of the authors (especially Shibasaki) are fascinating things but are difficult to record, and largely for technical reasons their place in clinical testing is still limited.

Forty-four pages of references are collected together at the end of the book and there is a full index. This book should be in every up-to-date clinical neurophysiologist's laboratory, and will be well used there.

There are plenty of figures and the printed price should not put us off enjoying their contents.

JA SIMPSON

Notice

Neuro-ophthalmology

The fifth meeting of the International Society of Neuro-ophthalmology and the seventh Congress of the Study Group of Neuro-ophthalmology and Neuro-genetics of the World Federation of Neurology will be held 14–18 May, 1984 in Belgium. Information may be obtained from Professor L. Neetens, Academic Hospital, University of Antwerp, Wilrijkstraat 10, 2520 Edegem, Belgium.