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THE EDITORIAL COMMITTEE welcomes original papers, which should be addressed to the Editor, Journal of Neurology, Neurosurgery, and Psychiatry, BMA House, Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9JR. Papers are accepted on the understanding that the subject matter has not been and will not be published in any other journal. Papers should deal with original matter and the discussion should be closely relevant to this. Manuscripts should be typewritten in double spacing on one side of the paper only. Two copies (including figures and tables) should be submitted of which only one need be a top copy. A summary of about 50 words should appear at the beginning of each paper. The name(s) of the hospital or laboratory should also appear. Full postal address for correspondence and reprints should be supplied. Receipt of manuscripts will be acknowledged.

The Editor will welcome Short Reports or Preliminary Communications limited to about 1000 words and with no more than one figure and one table. Also welcome are Letters to the Editor.

ETHICS Ethical considerations will be taken into account in the assessment of papers (see the Medical Research Council's publications on the ethics of human experimentation, and the World Medical Association's code of ethics, known as the Declaration of Helsinki (see *British Medical Journal* 1964;2:177)).

ABBREVIATIONS Measurements should be expressed in SI units (see *Journal of Clinical Pathology* 1974;27:590-7; *British Medical Journal* 1974;4:490; *International System of Units* 1972. National Bureau of Standards, Special Publication 330. United States Bureau of Printing: Washington). For recognised abbreviations see *Journal of Neurology, Neurosurgery, and Psychiatry* 1975;38:5; and *Units, Symbols and Abbreviations*, Third Edition 1977, edited by DN Baron, Royal Society of Medicine: London.

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Millikan CH, Eaton LH. Clinical evaluation of ACTH and cortisone in myasthenia gravis. *Neurology (Minneapolis)* 1951;1:145-52.

Penn AS. Immunological features of myasthenia gravis. In: Aguayo AJ, Karpatis G, eds. *Topics in Nerve and Muscle Research*. Amsterdam: *Excerpta Medica* 1975:123-32.

Coers C, Woolf AL. *The innervation of muscle. A biopsy study*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1951:16-24.

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Diseases of the Nervous System. 4th ed. By WB Matthews. (Pp 315; Paperback £12.00.) Oxford: Blackwell Scientific Publications, 1982.

The prodigious growth of knowledge and understanding about diseases of the nervous system forces the "standard textbook" to give way to the multivolume handbook which is never up to date, or else to assume an encyclopaedic nature which makes it impossible for the occasional reader to sense the ambience of the disease. The more successful of the smaller books do this. "Matthews and Miller" has been a favourite with undergraduates as it covers the subject in a book of reasonable size with, considering its progenitors, a surprisingly old fashioned division of chapters sprinkled with quotable aphorisms. The flashes of Geordie wit have gone with the passing of Henry Miller and this fourth edition is now fully the teaching of Bryan Matthews of Oxford. Accordingly, it has elegance that tempts the student to read on to the end of the chapter but sometimes narcotises criticism. He will be rewarded with an excellent picture of patients with neurological disorders, and instructed in the range of investigations available. He will not, however, be alerted to the possible dangers that accompany even routine diagnostic procedures. Is the metrizamide myelogram so "essential" in the investigation of spinal cord disease as to justify a risk of convulsions? Electromyography surely merits at least an index reference. But I think the main criticism must be about a tendency to leave the reader in doubt about the value or otherwise of treatment. Some of the material on pathogenesis is tentative and out of date. It is now unlikely that "blocked receptor sites" are the major cause of myasthenic fatigue, but surely the continuing scepticism about an immunological basis is difficult to sustain.

The book is sure to satisfy another generation of students, but some modernisation is required — and that does not mean "imaging techniques", the topical jargon, but more integration with the student's basic teaching is neurophysiology. Brevity can be a fault if it is erroneous (eg the statement about the energy requirement of the nerve action potential), but on the whole this book succeeds because it is of a size to permit the beginner to have an overall view to which the details may be added later.

JA SIMPSON

Handbook of Stress: Theoretical and Clinical Aspects. Edited by Leo Goldberger and Shlomo Breznitz. (Pp 804; \$49.95.) New York: The Free Press, 1982.

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 to their book 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, Lazarous, 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 the references are before 1970. 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

Evoked Potentials in Clinical Testing. Edited by AM Halliday. (Pp 575; £30.00.) Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone, 1982.

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 basics and clinical application in electroretinography (Ikeda) electrocochleography (Gibson) and central auditory potentials (Robinson and Rudge).

Recording techniques and the generators in early (particularly spinal and subcortical) components of the SEP has been a minefield of controversy in recent years, and Jones gives a good account of developments and the current position, although the clinical place of cervical evoked potentials is not yet entirely clear.

Again, movement-related potentials (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 neurophysiological laboratory, and will be well-used there. There are plenty of figures and the price is I suppose no more than we should expect.

DN/RUSHTON

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 A. Neetens, Academic Hospital, University of Antwerp, Wilrijkstraat 10, 2520 Edegem, Belgium.