vital clue to reconnect the memory circuits of the mind (in the same way that laevodopa has mobilised patients with Parkinson's disease); clinical medicine can offer to make the whole person as healthy as possible; but, epidemiology could provide the essential vision for effective medical investigation and management. This symposium report allows us to see how epidemiology has been progressing in Scandinavia and gives glimpses of the way similar work and ideas have been developing in Germany and England.

BRIAN LIVESLEY


More text-books of Child Neurology originate from the United States than from anywhere else and their quality has varied. This is an impressive book. For their second edition the editors have assembled a task-force of 48 contributors. Thirty-six chapters, in two volumes, are divided, logically, into three unequal sections. The first and shorter, "Evaluation of the patients' problems" discusses the history, examination and laboratory investigation, with due emphasis given to the developmental aspects. (I was happy to read that the examination should be pleasant and enjoyable for the child as well as for the examiner; this is true and worth saying, odd though it might appear in the context of the neurology of adults.)

In neurological textbooks the choice of whether to use a "symptom" or a "system" approach is a difficult one, and neither alone proves entirely satisfactory, so that a mixture of the two is often used. The authors have opted to use both methods, the second section being devoted to "symptoms and signs of neurologic diseases in childhood" and the third to a discussion of those diseases. The problems of duplication and repetition are to some extent overcome by the fact that the chapters on symptoms and signs are written, with one exception, by single authors, while those on diseases are entrusted to consortia of contributors numbering between three and seven, which include the writers of the relevant earlier chapter.

The neurodegenerative disorders, poorly described in many text books, are well dealt with by the authors concerned. If the allocation of particular diseases to the chapter on metabolic disorders or degenerative disorders of the CNS seems rather arbitrary, this arrangement is symptomatic of the difficulty resulting from the varying stages of understanding of these conditions in terms of basic biochemical and enzymatic defects. The accounts given are probably the best available today, being well provided with references old and new, classical and translational, and with historical reviews of the evolution of knowledge. English neurologists will be glad to see FE Batten given credit for the early accounts of neuronal ceroid lipofuscinosis (though in truth the earliest account was that of Stengel in 1826—who had the disadvantage of writing in Norwegian).

In the chapter of seizure disorders with seven contributors, the section on febrile seizures stands out. In 3½ pages, Karin Nelson, whose work has done much to clarify the subject, gives a distillate of current data and concepts with clearly stated figures for risk factors for subsequent epilepsy after febrile seizures. In some other areas in this chapter not all would agree with the emphasis given. For example arguments are advanced why no arbitrary division should be made between infantile spasms and similar seizures of later childhood, but it seems to this reader that infantile spasms have sufficient features distinguishing them from other forms of myoclonic seizure to merit separate discussion. More stress might have been laid on the frequency with which stigmata of tuberous sclerosis are found in children presenting with infantile spasms and the numbers of such cases in which a parent and apparently healthy siblings may show similar stigmata. Among "partial seizures with elementary symptomatology", focal seizures of "sylvian" type with centrotemporal spike focus are given a short paragraph, but deserve more expanded treatment as being commoner than is generally appreciated and having a good prognosis. They also deserve some references, since it was as long ago as 1967 that Lombroso, in Boston, showed this type of seizure generally to have a favourable outcome both clinically and as regards the EEG. The good response commonly seen to carbamazepine could also have been stressed. I was rather surprised also to see liver damage listed among "common toxic symptoms and signs" for both carbamazepine and valproic acid. Admittedly the latter drug is used in Britain as sodium valproate, with which serious liver problems do not seem to be common. The suggested daily dose of carbamazepine, 20-40 mg/kg, is double that suggested by most physicians and is likely to lead to the lethargy and ataxia which are listed as other common toxic symptoms and signs.

Learning disabilities and associated conditions are well reviewed. Methylenidate is a drug perhaps under-used in Britain and much more widely used in the United States, is discussed helpfully and the need is stressed to monitor carefully not only the "target symptom", usually hyperactivity, but also other aspects of the child's functioning, such as learning and cognition. The question of food additives as a possible factor is increasingly raised by parents of overactive children in the United Kingdom as reports from North America become more widely known. The authors believe the available evidence does not justify use of an additive-free diet and it is helpful to have an authoritative statement of this kind based on wide experience, though one sees occasional cases in which the diet does seem beneficial.

Though expensive, the book seems good value for money. The quality of the illustrations, clinical, radiological and pathological, is generally high and there are many excellent anatomical drawings. The two volumes have an attractive cover design and are a pleasure to handle. The index and introductory adnexa are repeated in the second volume for the reader's convenience, a system deserving wider use. This book can be highly recommended despite some minor shortcomings of this kind mentioned.

EM BRIGHT


This book is about the action of steroids, not catecholamines, on the brain. Fourteen authors from the USA, London and Utrecht give an authoritative account of five highly specialised topics. These include the presence of glucocorticoid receptors in the brain and particularly in the hippocampus; the role of steroids in brain development; the extremely complex feedback control mechanisms of anterior pituitary gland ACTH secretion; steroid actions at motor nerve terminals; and behavioural changes caused by steroids. This is all very heavy reading. Yet despite this the topics discussed have great research interest as well as considerable clinical implications. Among the steroid hormones, the effect of glucocorticoid on nervous system excitability are exceptional and spontaneous seizures were often reported in early patients.