

Book reviews

Organic Brain Pathology and the Bender-Gestalt Test. A Differential Diagnostic Scoring System. By Mary Louise Marley. (Pp 264; £19.60.) Grune & Stratton, New York, 1982.

The Bender Visual-Motor Gestalt Test (copying and drawing simple designs from memory) has been used in clinical practice for many years. It was developed on the premise that accurate visuomotor perceptual behaviour is a skilled act which can be distorted by brain damage. The present volume offers a novel scoring system which was developed from the analysis of 640 patients who suffered vascular accidents. The system is based on 12 specific criteria such as analysis of confused sequences, line quality and angulation difficulties, the degree of perseveration, extension of lines and so forth. Although this qualitative analysis can be of assistance to the clinical psychologist when evaluating patients' drawings, the basic contention, that the test provides a technique for ascertaining the presence or absence of organic brain pathology, is unacceptable. At present there is a consensus of opinion that the brain is not equipotential in its function and that damage to particular areas of the brain gives rise to specific alterations of higher mental functions. For this reason it would not be surprising to find patients with organic pathology producing a normal performance if damage is confined to cerebral regions which do not subserve the organisation of visuomotor perceptual behaviour.

MARIA A WYKE

Psychopharmacology of Old Age. Edited by D Wheatley (British Association for Psychopharmacology Monographs). (Pp 194; £15.) Oxford University Press 1982.

This monograph is based on a meeting held by the British Association for Psychopharmacology in Autumn 1981, which the reviewer attended. The first section of the book covers basic concepts and includes chapters on the general nature of the aging process, and the degenerative dementias, together with accounts of pharmacokinetics and drug compliance in the elderly. The other two sections are concerned with cognitive and psychiatric disorders in old age and their treatment. There have recently been several similar proceedings published on this theme. This one dif-

fers from the rest of the bunch in two ways. Firstly, about a quarter of this slim volume is taken up with a review of "Org 2766", an analogue of ACTH, which may be of interest to some readers but which as yet does not appear to have any theoretical or empirical association with cognitive disorders in aged or dementing subjects. Secondly, and as a consequence of this, there is little or no space allotted to some topics of current interest in this field. For example, there is brief reference to the pathology, neurotransmitter changes and cognitive disorder in Alzheimer's disease, which is the most important cause of cognitive disorder in the elderly. However, rational attempts to develop treatments for Alzheimer's disease based on this knowledge are not discussed. Instead, apart from "Org 2766", we hear only about the "old duo"—hyderygine and piracetam. McDonald's chapter on these two drugs is excellent and also competently reviews methods of assessing drug efficacy in dementia, but most of it can be seen elsewhere. However, this book is a relatively cheap source of this contribution. Other "gems" include an account of a study of the possible relationship between acquired deafness and dementia and depression in the elderly. Any associations between these conditions are not established in the study, but the scale of the problem of uncorrected deafness in the elderly population is worth finding out about and has important implications for those engaged in diagnosis, treatment or in any other interaction with older people. Finally, there is a good account of paranoid psychosis in the elderly and guidelines for its treatment. In summary, this volume suffers from the usual drawbacks of books based on meetings, but is quite a useful source of information on some topics.

CHRISTINE SMITH

Familial Brain Tumours, Volume 9 of Developments in Oncology. By Cornelis C Tijssen, Michael R Halprin and Lambertus J Endtz. (Pp 470; Dfl 125.00.) The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers BV, 1982.

This specialised work is the ninth volume in a series devoted to developments in oncology. The three principal authors have compiled, as completely as possible, the case reports of familial brain tumours existing in the world literature from the nineteenth century up to 1982. The factual information in each report has been abstracted and is critically reviewed in terms of histologi-

cal and clinical diagnosis, as well as in the nature of the family relationship involved. Familial cases of medulloblastoma, of meningioma, of choroid plexus papilloma, of glioma, of pinealoma and of fibrosarcoma, each have a chapter devoted to them. There is, in addition, a brief introductory chapter on general aspects of heredity and tumours, by a medical oncologist. The book is clearly written and set out logically.

This register will be of interest chiefly to those with a special interest in neuro-oncology. The authors have performed a valuable service by assembling a great deal of information from widely scattered sources, and by analysing it critically. However, they have not been able to reach firm conclusions about the influences of genetic factors in neuro-oncology. As a result of compiling this register the authors have suggested that collection of further case material of tumours in twins, siblings, and occurring in families over more than one generation, should be done in a prospective manner. They have undertaken to maintain a register of such reports that may be submitted to them in an "International Register of Familial Brain Tumours". This is an important undertaking and deserves to succeed.

The volume has been produced to a high standard with clear illustrations and tables, and at a reasonable price.

DAVID GT THOMAS

Cranial Computed Tomography. By Seungho Howard Lee and Krishna CVG Rao. (Pp 723; £64.95.) Maidenhead, McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1983.

This is an important book which could easily become an indispensable source of reference. It is written by 21 North American neuroradiologists of the younger generation and provides a comprehensive review of the state of the art of head CT scanning. The 17 chapters deal with the technical and anatomical background of CT diagnosis, but most are devoted to various clinical aspects, for example congenital anomalies, tumours in children and adults, trauma, infections, white-matter disease and orbital lesions. Almost all the 1,000 or more CT images are printed enlarged to 8 cm × 9 cm (all medical editors please follow!), with detailed captions. This splendid pictorial collection makes the book seem like an atlas, but this appearance is deceptive since the text is