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 Tjissen, 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

complete as well as readable and up-to-date, expertly covering all aspects of intracranial pathology. The end-chapter references comprise an almost complete list of the pre-1982 head CT literature. The serious student need look no further. While cheaper paperback texts are now available for the novice, this book can be recommended to a more sophisticated audience such as the practising neurologist and neuroradiologist, and as a bench book in CT departments.

EH BURROWS

Human Motor Neuron Diseases. Volume 36 of Advances in Neurology. Edited by Lewis P Rowland. (Pp 715; \$117.80.) New York: Raven Press, 1982.

This book is part of the "Advances in Neurology" series of Raven Press, which is known to all neurologists. It is based on a symposium held in Scottsdale, Arizona, in 1981 under the auspices of the Muscular Dystrophy Association. Although the aim was to discuss problems in the pathogenesis of motor neuron disease, the remit was far wider since, understandably, clues from other motor neuron diseases could well be relevant.

Although the overall standard is excellent, I particularly enjoyed the clinical and pathological sections. There is a definitive chapter on epidemiology by John Kurtzke and an excellent review of the relationship of antecedent poliomyelitis by Milton Alter and Leonard Kurland. Although there are several chapters on virology and immunology, we still have no definite clues as to aetiology—as disappointingly revealed by the small section on therapy.

As with all Raven Press publications, this volume is beautifully produced and is essential reading for anyone interested in research of motor neuron disease. The discussions have been included and, unlike other symposia, are rewarding to read. I am afraid the book is too expensive for most individuals to buy but encouragement should be given to the librarian to include it in the neurological section.

F CLIFFORD ROSE

Annual Progress in Child Psychiatry and Child Development Edited by Stella Chess and Alexander Thomas. (Pp 688 \$40.80) New York: Brunner Mazel Inc, 1981.

One habitually approaches compendia of "Recent Advances . . ." or "Annual Prog-

ress . . ." with a degree of circumspection, especially so when such bold claims as this are made for the volume: "A selection of the year's outstanding contributions to the understanding and treatment of the normal and disturbed child". Edited by two of the elder statesmen of child psychiatry the work comprises forty-one articles, culled from twenty journals. Seventeen papers originate from just three (American) publications. The structure of the annual is sensible, with ten main sections devoted to a variety of topics including: developmental theory and empirical studies, clinical issues, language and adolescence. Each section is prefaced by perfunctory remarks from the editors. No consistent attempt has, it seems, been made to provide a coherent sense of progress in this challenging subject, although it should be noted articles of a traditional psychoanalytic stripe are conspicuous by their absence. So are "foreign language" contributions, the entire enterprise having a somewhat parochial air. That said, what conclusions would one draw from this work about recent advances in knowledge of normal and abnormal child psychology? In a word, progress is conceptual. As Thomas himself puts it "current developmental theories are (nowadays) almost uniformly interactionist in their formulations", and by that he means interaction between the individual and his social environment. This perspective is being increasingly frequently operationalised, and is demonstrated by studies presented here; for example, examining the mother-infant attachment process or the reactions of children to the birth of a sibling. The resultant data not only call into question conventional views of psychological growth but indicate new directions in the management and treatment of childhood disorders.

DAVID SKUSE

Seminars in Neurological Surgery—Clinical Management of Intracranial Aneurysms. Edited by LN Hopkins, Donlin M Long. (Pp 331; \$48.28.) New York: Raven Press, 1982.

This multi-author book most adequately covers all aspects of injury to the cervical spine and cervical spinal cord. As with all books attempting to cover a clinical problem in its entirety the chapters are uneven in content and style and leave some doubt as to the breadth and sophistication of the intended audience. The early chapters

relating to clinical assessment and mechanism are appropriate to trainees in accident departments, with their special emphasis on diagnostic pitfalls. Excellent chapters relating to neurophysiology endeavour to delineate the application of evoked potentials to diagnosis and prognosis and their correlation with neurological findings. These would particularly interest trainee neurosurgeons and some of their consultant colleagues. All concerned with treatment of such cases would find the chapters on management well worthy of attention, though some might disagree with the tendency to early surgery wherein instability was assumed on less than firm grounds. The poor prognosis of complete cord lesions reflects universal experience. Complications of treatment are dealt with fully and many of the illustrative cases are enlightening.

This book serves a useful purpose as the collected up to date thoughts of well known authorities and should at least be available in every department dealing with spinal injuries. It is useful reading and a good reference work.

ALAN RICHARDSON