some way towards looking at the specific interaction of aging and alcoholism. In particular, I found the chapters dealing with the biology of alcoholism and aging in rodents, neurotransmitter function, changes in biogenic amines, and tolerance and dependence to be useful.

The rest of the book has little to offer and it was all too easy to forget that the topic was alcoholism in the elderly rather than alcoholism in general, as most chapters only paid lip service to this issue. Perhaps we can look forward to a future volume in the series when our knowledge of the field has advanced substantially.

MARIA RON

Progress in Migraine Research 2: Progress in Neurology Series. Edited by F Clifford Rose. (Pp 292; £35.00.) London: Pitman Publishing Ltd, 1984.

This up-date on migraine covers clinical aspects, pathogenesis, neurochemistry and therapeutics. The 31 chapters provide a very satisfactory survey of the field. Bickerstaff's Sandoz foundation lecture on complicated migraine is an outstanding contribution. There is a refreshing clinical orientation in many of the papers. It is interesting to learn that in most patients oral ergotamine produces almost no detectable level in the blood and that better levels are provided by rectal administration and by inhalation, though there is much variation in all subjects.

Topical issues relating to dietary precipitation, opioids, peptides and autonomic function provide useful appraisals of recent advances.

This is in no sense a textbook on migraine, but is an invaluable compilation of recent experimental work which should be of interest to neurologists and physicians confronted by the continuing enigma of migraine sufferers.

JMS PEARCE

Brain Protection: Morphological, Pathophysiological and Clinical Aspects. Edited by K Wiedemann and S Hoyer. (Pp 168; \$33.40.) Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 1983.

The proceedings of a conference held at Hirschhorn Castle, West Germany in this book cover morphological, pathophysiological and clinical aspects of cerebral protection. The majority of the contributions are from Europe. The pre-

face refreshingly lacks the self-praise of many published symposium proceedings. Despite considerable advances in the field of brain protection, few conclusions have been reached. With regard to the outcome of the conference the editors admit that "it cannot be claimed with certainty that firm ground has been reached in even some of these fields". However, they have succeeded in their aim of producing a useful volume for those engaged in research and clinical application of cerebral protection, particularly for those new to the subject. Although the discussion after each paper has not been published the final chapter tries to summarise the opinions shared by the participants.

There is considerable variation in the quality of individual contributions and sadly some of the clinical papers are most open to criticism. In this and many similar publications, it is apparent that having been asked to present a paper the authors are prepared to present results from half completed trials and not surprisingly reach little or no conclusion. The concept of false negative results to clinical trials is well known. To conclude that "data so far available do thus not fully support the working hypothesis" is perhaps not surprising following an open uncontrolled study of 31 patients. All such sinners should read Miller's chapter on Clinical Trials of Brain Protection. Several papers are essentially brief reviews of work published elsewhere and the necessary detail for critical analysis is absent.

Barbiturates have long been used in experimental and clinical studies and their serious side effects are well known. Interest is now being expressed in non-barbiturate hypnotics and also in calcium channel blockers and these are extensively discussed. The attenuation of free fatty acid release by these drugs after ischaemic damage may be a measure of their efficacy but it seems unlikely, in view of the numerous complex changes that take place, to be a unique monitor for the success of therapy.

It is appropriate that the best chapter in the book is also the first. Kalimo *et al* have produced a clear and readable account of Structural Aspects of Energy Failure States. They comment upon the deleterious effects of excessive lactate accumulation, but note that the mechanism that causes cell damage is unclear.

This book is worth referring to on the library shelf but too expensive to merit a place on one's own.

D HILTON-JONES

Vertebrobasilar Arterial Occlusive Disease: Medical and Surgical Management. Edited by Ramon Berguer and Raymond B Bauer. (Pp 352; \$56.00.) New York: Raven Press, 1983.

Doctors Bauer and Berguer rightly felt that carotid vascular disease has received enough attention and that it is time to think harder about the more difficult area of vertebrobasilar disease. Vertebrobasilar arterial disease certainly is difficult to deal with for all concerned—neurologists, radiologists and vascular surgeons—and any gain in knowledge in this field would be very welcome. The editors organised a conference in Detroit in 1982 to discuss all aspects of the problem, and this book contains all the papers presented. The material is a mixture of reviews and original research by mainly North American authors, and tends to reflect a generally more aggressive approach to cerebrovascular disease than is fashionable in Europe. The delay in publication has inevitably rendered some of the chapters on the "growing points" of cerebrovascular research such as Nuclear Magnetic Resonance Imaging, Position Emission Tomography and Digital subtraction a little dated.

The main criticism of this work is that the editors and authors have not reached a consensus about what they mean by vertebrobasilar arterial disease. The clinicians name various different constellations of symptoms as diagnostic, whereas the surgeons and radiologists base their definitions more on angiographic or CT appearances. Several of the authors point out that the lack of an agreed definition of vertebrobasilar insufficiency has made it very difficult to interpret the reports of the pathogenesis, natural history and management that have appeared in the literature over the years. Perhaps the next Detroit conference on Vertebrobasilar Arterial Disease will provide a satisfactory consensus definition.

Despite the serious drawback of an agreed definition, there is some interesting reading in this book for those who specialise in cerebrovascular disease. Dr Caplan reviews clinical and pathological features, and rightly highlights the many different causes of cerebral infarction; small vessel disease, haemodynamic problems, thrombo-embolism from atheromatous ulcers and embolism from the heart, among others.

Dr Heyman's chapter on epidemiologic aspects is perhaps misnamed, since the data are drawn from a hospital-based series of