Book reviews

Essays in Neurochemistry and Neuropharmacology. Vol 5. Edited by MBH Youdim, W Lovenberg, DF Sharman and JR Lagnado. (Pp 153; £16.50.) Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 1981.

A further volume of *Essays in Neurochemistry and Neuropharmacology* dealing with a variety of topics. This particular volume contains essays on stereospecific transport carrier systems for l-tryptophan and l-tryptophan in relation to monoamine synthesis, the neuronal induction of pineal gland serotonin N-acetyl transferase activity, octopamine as a putative neuro-regulator, dopamine neurons in the retina, evaluation of animal models for stimulant-induced psychosis and studies of suicide inhibitors of central nervous system enzymes. A mixed bag, but as the editors state, this is the intention of this series so that a wide audience will be attracted to it. The probability is that it will only be bought by libraries since individuals will not have sufficient funds to buy books only part of which are relevant to their own particular interests. Of the chapters contained within this volume I found that by Iuvone and Neff to provide a detailed account of dopamine neurons of the retina and their response to light, a subject which has received much attention recently. Segal and colleagues provide a rather critical evaluation of use of amphetamine in animals as a model of psychosis in humans. They conclude that further study is required in establishing the relationship between the stimulant-induced behaviour in animals and that which occurs in humans as a basis for understanding the aetiology of the psychopathological symptoms. Indeed, I am still left wondering whether a good animal model of psychosis does actually exist. Finally, the essay by Singer and his colleagues on suicide inhibitors of the central nervous system enzymes provides an interesting insight into the use of such compounds to inhibit specific biochemical processes occurring in brain.

The advancement of this field might well provide a further means of specific drug targeting in clinical use. In conclusion, a volume containing a number of interesting chapters, moderately priced at £16.50, but more for those that are collecting the series than as an individual volume of interest to a general audience.

PG JENNER

Research Progress in Epilepsy. Progress in Neurology Series. Edited by F Clifford Rose. (Pp 562; £37.50.) London: Pitman Books Limited, 1983.

Recent years have seen a number of large books on epilepsy, most of them based on symposia by invited speakers. It can be a useful format for "state of the art" reportage over a broad conspectus but the selection of established authorities ensures that the chapter contents are already familiar to readers with previous interest in the subject. The question therefore arises whether this is a satisfactory format for introducing others to it. For sure, the invited panel is likely to omit anybody with new ideas who has not yet established a chain of research papers or who is not personally known to the organisers.

These generalisations are well illustrated by this book despite its title. It is impossible to comment on each of the 57 (repeat 57) chapters but they contain their usual share of restatements, "me too" articles and reports on minor associations or unusual manifestations. Part I (epidemiological aspects) contains yet another revision of "the international" classification of the epilepsies. With due respect to Gastaut's wide experience, it is not acceptable to have any classification imposed as "international" until the general principles of classification are agreed by a fully representative international meeting of all categories of users, including the neurologists and paediatricians to whom epilepsy forms a major item in the day's activities. Terms should be appropriate to the language—in English the word "partial" is not a satisfactory equivalent to "of local onset". "Partial status epilepticus" is an impossibility. Consciousness, *per se*, has no higher status than other cerebral functions. When age is added as an additional classification factor the proposed classification of status epilepticus ends up as a check list of all forms of epilepsy subdivided by age and site of discharge.

Part II (basic aspects) contains some valuable information but highlights the above comments on lack of forum for free communications. There is only one paper on the role of the cerebellum but it is a good one (Gartside). This subject should certainly figure more prominently in a symposium on research progress. The old calcium theory is reactivated in a more plausible form involving the recently discovered Ca^{++} channels of dendrites with the possibility of selective neuronal vulnerability.

Three sections on clinical, psychiatric

and paediatric aspects are rather conventional but those unfamiliar with epilepsy in childhood are recommended to study the chapters by Aicardi and O'Donohoe on benign epilepsies of childhood. Part VI (investigative aspects) describes personal experiences with ambulatory monitoring but it is not evident that the diagnostic return, additional to conventional EEG, is worth the cost and limited topographical data. CT scanning and positron computed tomography are, as would be expected, of limited use where localised pathology might be anticipated. But it is tiresome to remind a new generation that epileptogenic activity occurs at the edge of lesions: the authors on positron scanning still state that "the ictal EEG localisation was later determined to be incorrect".

Part VII (therapeutic aspects) strongly links anticonvulsive activity of drugs with enhanced GABAergic inhibition with prolonged opening time of Cl^- channels, directly or indirectly. Monotherapy, the in-vivo of the '70s, is not so mandatory and we can again treat patients instead of blood levels. Part VIII (social aspects) is somewhat parochial. By confining studies to England and Wales it omits important educational advances and provision of sheltered employment in Scotland.

The book is well produced and edited in this now familiar and successful series. Inferior pictures of EEG records, and uncalibrated records are the responsibility of authors who ought to know better.

JA SIMPSON

Hughlings Jackson on Psychiatry. By Kenneth Dewhurst. (Pp 169 £9.00). Oxford: Sandford Publications, 1982.

Kenneth Dewhurst again has provided us with a delight. He has collected together from all sources those writings of Hughlings Jackson that pertain to neuropsychiatry, including those on temporal lobe epilepsy. Many of these essays were not included in James Taylor's edited publication of "Selected Writings of John Hughlings Jackson", first published in 1931/2 and reprinted in 1958. Dewhurst categorises Hughlings Jackson as "an eccentric Victorian and a hard-headed Yorkshireman" who "regarded neuropsychiatry as part of neurology and subject to the same discipline as other branches of medicine". Each chapter contains Dewhurst's digest of Hughlings Jackson's position on a particular problem of neuro-