Book reviews

Biomedical Aspects of Depression and Its Treatment. By Ross J Baldessarini. (Pp 180; \$19.50.) Washington: American Psychiatric Press Inc, 1983.

Depression is a common condition with a life time risk of clinically significant depression of greater than one in ten. It is apparent from clinical experience that the term depression covers a wide range from excessive sadness to severe medical conditions which bear all the hallmarks of a definite biologically-based disease. Interest in the latter group of depressive illnesses increased markedly in the last decade or so with the advent of the antidepressants, both tricyclic and MAOIs. Dr Baldessarini, Professor of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, has written an excellent and succinct account of these aspects of depression. He covers the genetics, biochemistry and physiology of depression in the first part of his book and then in the second outlines recent advances in the pharmacology of antidepressants.

Two features stand out in this book. Firstly, it represents a sober and balanced account of recent scientific findings and its conclusions are cautious and unexceptionable. The second feature is a series of useful summary tables which deal with the research topics and various other aspects of the biology and pharmacology of depression.

The book is an excellent distillate of modern research findings in depression and can be thoroughly recommended to all those carrying out research in the field and also to those clinicians who have an interest in keeping up with current consensus opinion on recent research findings.

MALCOLM H LADER

Fundamentals of EEG Technology. Vol. 1 Basic Concepts and Methods. By Fay S Tyner, John R Knott and W Brem Mayer Jr. (Pp 330; \$61.00.) New York: Raven Press, 1983.

Here, at last, is a really clear basic book for the absolute beginner in EEG. It is as useful for the aspiring clinical neurophysiologist as for the trainee technologist. The authors assume nothing and start with a resumé of first principles of electricity and electronics, numeracy and measurement. On this foundation is built up the technological basis of EEG machines, elec-

trodes, polarity conventions and localisation, activation procedures and artefacts. Diagrams are used profusely and are all labelled so that every detail of their meaning is unambiguous. There is an exceptionally broad range of well chosen and well annotated illustrations for the classification of EEG activities. The promised second volume will deal with clinical correlations.

The authors are particularly explicit on measurements, on the important topic of electrical (and other) safety, on eye movement artefacts, on polygraphic recording of the neonate and on which EEG features are normal and which abnormal.

This book has a floppy cover with sturdy ring binding. The whole impression is of a comfortable, friendly and not too intellectual attitude that makes you want to take it home, read it through and get started in EEG. It should do wonders for recruitment!

PAMELA F PRIOR

Electroclinical Features of the Psychomotor Seizure. By Heinz Gregor Wieser. (Pp 242; £40.00.) London: Butterworths, New York: Gustav Fischer, 1983.

There are two methods of approaching clinical description. The first is to study large populations and to draw statistical conclusions, and the second is to study intensively small numbers of individuals and to extrapolate the findings to the generality of patients. This monograph is an extreme example of the latter approach. The book is divided into three sections. The first is an enormously detailed clinical and stereo-EEG study of spontaneous psychomotor seizures in 29 patients and of intracerebral stimulation in a further 23. The second section consists of 11 illustrative case histories chosen from section 1, and the third a discussion and extrapolation of these data. In section 1 is the meat, and astoundingly indigestible it is. Clinical and stereo-EEG findings are analysed by computer-based correlation, carried to bewildering lengths, and supported by perplexing diagrams. Clarity is sacrificed to all-inclusiveness in a way only possible with computed analyses, and the overall effect baffling. Nevertheless, good points are made, and for instance, the importance of temporal as well as topographical analyses of the EEG findings are rightly stressed. The second section is refreshingly clear, and the case histories are discussed in depth with great precision. I most enjoyed the third section, as here is a masterly summary of

previous clinical and EEG studies of the psychomotor seizure, the role of intracerebral recording and the implications of the present data. This section is comprehensive and well balanced. The debt to the work of Penfield and his Montreal colleagues is obvious, but their findings are critically extended. There is an interesting and stimulating discussion of both the anatomical and pathophysiological mechanisms of psychomotor seizures, although it is doubtful whether the data entirely support the proposed reclassification of psychomotor seizures or the notion of limbic epilepsy (a most overstated concept). The British reader especially has a lot to learn, as little intra-cerebral EEG recording is carried out in this country, and the author's experience in these techniques is authoritative. The importance of this work for epilepsy surgery is concisely discussed, and again in this area the fundamental value of intracerebral EEG recording is clearly demonstrated. I found the work often tantalising, never prosaic and always fascinating. It is essential reading for all those with a serious interest in the subject.

SIMON SHORVOY

Experimental Therapeutics of Movement Disorders. Advances in Neurology Vol. 37 Edited by Stanley Fahn, Donald B Caine and Ira Shoulson. (Pp 339; \$52.08.) New York: Raven Press, 1983.

This is the 37th volume in this series to appear in 10 years. It is also the 10th volume in the series concerned with Parkinsonism, movement or extrapyramidal disorders. Many other publishing houses are presently following a similar policy of mass publication so that the reader is veritably flooded by several monographs each year on the same topics.

How should one choose? Or, since personal taste and individual interest are the main determinants of choice, is it more pertinent to ask how do the publishers justify yet another book on this subject?

Half of this book is devoted to Parkinsonism and half to the various dyskinesias. Contributors discuss the results of low dose levodopa, long term bromocriptine therapy, serotonergic agents for levodopa induced hallucinosis and drug holidays. The efficacy of dopamine agonists bromocriptine, pergolide (not available in the UK) and lisuride in patients with dose related fluctuations is confirmed, though random "swinging" and "resistant fluctuators" remain intractable. New ergoline derivatives