

Book reviews

Introduction to Neuropsychology. By J Graham Beaumont. (Pp 314; Cloth £15.00; Paper £8.50.) Oxford: Blackwell Scientific Publications, 1983.

Since the mid 1970s a number of good general texts on neuropsychology, of varying degrees of sophistication, have been published. New publications in this field therefore have a fair amount of competition to contend with. This book is valuable by virtue of giving a very broad coverage combined with economical exposition.

Apart from the brief introductory and concluding chapters the book is divided into two main sections. The first is devoted to clinical issues: there are descriptions of the typical neuropsychological consequences or lesions in the several cortical lobes, plus chapters on language disorders and psychosurgery. The second main section deals with experimental approaches to neuropsychology including "split brain" studies, divided visual fields, dichotic listening, EEG, evoked potentials, sex differences and handedness. The treatment of the material is scholarly and up-to-date. A suitably cautious stance is adopted in relation to some of the more speculative and controversial ideas concerning brain function. The main elements of current knowledge and theorising are presented concisely and the reader wanting more detail can benefit from the extensive references. One particularly interesting feature of the book is the characterisation of the three main theoretical approaches to clinical neuropsychology: the Russian "behavioural neurology" approach, deriving mainly from the work of Luria, the American approach, which relies largely upon comprehensive test batteries, and the British individual-centred, problem-solving style. The strengths and weaknesses of these are sensitively discussed.

The shortcomings of this book are the same as those of most other general neuropsychology books—a very limited treatment of the single most common neuropsychological disorder, dementia, and disappointingly little discussion of psychological contributions to treatment and rehabilitation.

I believe this book will fulfil its intention of being a useful introduction, particularly for psychology undergraduates and trainees, to clinical and experimental neuropsychology.

T TRAUER

Progress in Stroke Research 2. Edited by Roger M Greenhalgh and F Clifford Rose. (Pp 513; £37.50.) London: Pitman Books Ltd, 1983.

Advances in knowledge in cerebrovascular disease, and changes in views on management and investigation have been so rapid in recent years that the very logistics of publication mean that events may have overtaken the appearance of the book. Not so here however. Pitman's method of "fast conference reporting" gives us on the shelves in September papers given at a conference held in May, and the prompt collecting and collating of 50 contributions from 126 authors is a real credit to the editors, medical and commercial. In the five years since the first volume in this series assessment of investigation of strokes, and of the results of surgical intervention and the techniques employed have altered in many ways, and these are very clearly highlighted in a splendid forward by the two editors, which virtually summarises the meat of the book. It is one of the most valuable forwards I have read, for the contributions are by experts in the field talking to fellow experts, in a language of their own, which in 1984 Orwell might have called "stroke-speak"—not entirely comprehensible to the outsider. The obligatory section on epidemiology and pathophysiology of strokes is followed by a large section devoted to modern investigative techniques. This emphasises again how combinations of methods are better than one alone, and how ultrasound techniques combined with digital subtraction arterial imaging can produce results correlating nearly 100% with conventional arteriography, but with much reduced risk to the atheromatous patient (providing, that is, that the need sometimes to clarify a dubious finding does not mean conventional arteriography as well). As most of these are aimed at determining whether any, and if so, which method of surgical revascularisation is indicated the results of the various techniques are dealt with in detail. Positron emission tomographic scanning, as always ably presented and explained by the Hammersmith team, confirms the clinicians' view that little value would be expected in completed stroke from revascularisation procedures, but as a preventative in certain cases of carotid or middle cerebral stenosis even earlier intervention than usual might save later disability. The deeply rooted desire to maintain adequate cerebral perfusion during such procedures as carotid endarterectomy is shown by the different

methods described, some surgeons preferring to carry out the whole procedure with the patient still awake and talking. Very important stress is laid on selective arteriology and arterial reconstructive surgery being something for the very experienced, and the implications of this on training programmes is discussed. Amongst the many good contributions it would be hard and perhaps invidious to single out individual papers, but WS Field's splendidly clear and wise account of vertebro-basilar ischaemic syndromes comes as a breath of clinical fresh air in what is rather heavily technically orientated a publication, and in JE Thompson's "History of Carotid Artery Surgery" there is a fascinating illustration of a centaur and a Lapith warrior apparently applying mutual carotid compression. The book will have most appeal to those engaged in one branch of cerebrovascular disease and who want to keep abreast of what is going on in other branches. The outsider will find himself baffled by the jargon. For instance a reader wishing to know what Duplex scanning entails, will find it defined as "a combination of realtime B-mode imaging with pulsed Doppler fast Fourier spectrum analysis" and might feel sorry he asked the question. Some authors do assume a degree of knowledge their readers may not possess. My own lifetime campaign against jargon and abbreviations leaves me these days as a voice crying in the wilderness. Perhaps if one can't beat the system one will have to join it, and while MAVIS mounts her PET OPG-GEE to help the CAD PRIND (wouldn't Tolkien have been in his element?) I recommend this very up-to-date publication to all those interested in the present ability and the future hopes of combatting cerebrovascular catastrophes—they will not be disappointed by its contents.

EDWIN BICKERSTAFF

Hysterical Conversion Reactions. A Clinical Guide to Diagnosis and Treatment. By Michael I Weintraub. (Pp 145; £17.95.) Lancs: MT Press Ltd, 1983.

This is the first volume of the series "Neurological Illness: Diagnosis and Treatment". The author, who is also editor-in-chief of the series, is a Clinical Professor of Neurology at the New York Medical College. The aim of the volume, and of those to follow, is to familiarise physicians with common neurological disorders, their investigation and treatment. In the words of the author, the books are meant to be