Disorders of Peripheral Nerves. By Herbert H Schaumburg, Peter S Spencer and PK Thomas. (Pp 248; \$47.50.) Philadelphia: FA Davis Company, 1983.

The preface of this splendid book reminds the reader that a suitable explanation cannot be offered in 40% of patients with peripheral nerve disease and the pathology has not been fully determined in any one of them. This book arose from Schaumburg's syllabus at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine. We can easily understand that its popularity led to the expansion embodied in this work which is a concise monograph on peripheral neuropathy. It is intended for those engaged in the practice of general medicine and neurology. In this purpose it succeeds admirably.

So often when internationally recognised experts attempt books of this type, they swamp the student with minutiae of basic science which leaves him bewildered. Here, two short introductory chapters explain lucidly the terminology and classification and describe the mechanisms, cardinal pathological feature and clinicopathological correlations of the symmetrical generalised neuropathies and the focal and multifocal neuropathies. Myelinopathy, neuronopathy and peripheral injuries are simply explained.

Succeeding chapters deal with the metabolic, hereditary, toxic, ischaemic, infective and amyloid neuropathies, and nerve lesions associated with malignancy, trauma and the entrapment syndromes. The concluding sections cover cryptogenic neuropathy, clinical electrophysiology and nerve biopsy. Appendices illustrate the cutaneous fields of peripheral nerves and the segmental myotomes, reproducing Webb Haymaker's classic diagrams. Each subject is considered in a systematic fashion, clearly set out, concisely written and backed up by up-to-date reference lists. Case histories exemplify the principles in certain conditions and are a welcome compliment to the text. Much recent experimental work is condensed, the residual distillate forms a valuable précis of existing opinion at its best. It is always refreshing to read honest statements about areas of ignorance. Thus, the importance of the roles of nutritional-vitamin deficiencies and of ethanol itself in the production of alcoholic neuropathy remains controversial, and other undiscovered causes are possible. And, in diabetic neuropathy, neither the metabolic defects nor the changes in the vasa nervorum is adequate explanation of the aetiology.

Certain sections on treatment lack sufficient details. We are not told of the possible effects on carcinomatous neuropathy of resection or radiotherapy of the causal lesion; and in Refsum's syndrome, the claimed benefit of a low phytol diet is barely mentioned. What happens to the neuropathies of acromegaly and myxoedema when the metabolic cause is reversed? These are points which the inexperienced will wish to know. It is otherwise hard to find fault with this excellent monograph. There are other and larger texts on the subject; but, bearing in mind its intended readership, this book in my view is pre-eminent in the field. I would strongly commend it to general physicians, and no neurologist or trainee can afford to omit it from his personal library.

JMS PEARCE

The Benzodiazepines: from Molecular Biology to Clinical Practice. Edited by E Costa. (Pp 446; \$49.00.) New York: Raven Press, 1983.

Benzodiazepine drugs first discovered in the late 1950s have had a considerable impact both clinically and on basic neuroscience. The literature covering benzodiazepines is enormous and presents an almost impossible task to all but the most dedicated reader. For this reason volumes which summarise the history, development, current research and clinical use of benzodiazepines are essential. Many such books have appeared but most have not dealt adequately with this vast subject. The present volume however appears as a refreshing change providing a useful reference work for those interested in this area.

Clinicians view benzodiazepines as drugs in a multitude of disorders whereas to the basic scientist they are now essential tools in understanding brain function. This latter use was brought about by the discovery of specific benzodiazepine receptors in brain and the linkage of at least some of these receptors to GABA systems to form a GABA-benzodiazepine receptor complex. The development of this concept and its use in clarifying drug action and brain function are clearly discussed in the volume. With the identification of the benzodiazepine receptor the potential for the development of novel drug molecules is enhanced and indeed benzodiazepine antagonists can now be synthesised, as discussed in the text. Although benzodiazepine action is often closely linked to GABA systems it must not be forgotten

that these drugs can either directly or indirectly affect a whole variety of neuronal systems in brain and this point is emphasised well. For the clinician there are a variety of chapters discussing the use of benzodiazepines in a plethora of disorders including anxiety, sleep and schizophrenia.

With the discovery of benzodiazepine receptors on brain the obvious question is what is the endogenous substance acting at this site? If benzodiazepine research can lead to its identification then another major therapeutic advance may arise from the benzodiazepines themselves. Overall, I found this to be an excellent volume which I recommend for all those with an interest in this area and certainly libraries will find this a much requested work. I congratulate the editor on its conception and its presentation.

P JENNER

Practical Management of Stroke. By Graham P Mulley. (Pp 167; £6.95.) Beckenham: Croom Helm Ltd, 1984.

This small paper back has been written by a physician in the Department of Medicine for the Elderly from University Hospital, Leeds and is intended as a practical handbook for those involved in the long-term management of stroke patients. The author aims his book at the non-specialist physician and also at the medical student, but hopes to find a wider field of those interested in the care of stroke patients, not only doctors but also nurses, therapists, social workers and others who manage stroke patients in hospital and in the community.

The book opens with a short account of the history of stroke, its classification and our understanding of stroke. There are a few remarks on epidemiology and a second chapter devoted to pathogenesis which considers hypertension, the problem of atheroma, blood constituents and the role of heart disease but there is too brief a description of the commonest source of embolic infarction, that is, the large extracranial vessels.

Some consideration is given to the differential diagnosis of sudden neurological deficit, that is the differential diagnosis of stroke, and there is a short chapter devoted to TIAs, their origin and management.

More than half the book is devoted to the physical complications of stroke and such sequelae as pneumonia, pulmonary