

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 longer 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

embolus, spasticity, involuntary movements and frozen shoulder are considered separately. A complete chapter is devoted to the loss of language with a few sentences on the classification of speech disorders and simple "tips for talking to the patient."

Although rather naive in some of its considerations I feel those responsible for the care of stroke patients should study this chapter, for communication in the dysphasic patient is the essential problem and the simple statements of advice given on this chapter are very useful and certainly should be included in any teaching on the management and care of dysphasic patients. Perceptual disorders and psychological problems are considered and the remainder of the book is devoted to remarks concerning prognosis, the value of physiotherapy and the various aids and home modifications available.

There has been a great deal of discussion in the literature and in leading articles on the rehabilitation of stroke and now we have in this small pamphlet some very positive ideas put together in a most acceptable form. Very useful to those involved in the management of stroke patients are some addresses and publications put together in a comprehensive appendix, mentioning organisations and help groups available not only in the United Kingdom, but elsewhere in the world. This gives the pamphlet a somewhat international flavour and I feel at very low cost those in the neurological specialties should read the advice given to us by Dr Mulley, not with an attitude of critical scientific evaluation, but simply to remind ourselves where in certain areas we may be lax and inattentive in applying some of the simple precepts he discusses.

JB FOSTER

Physiological and Behavioural Effects of Food Constituents. *Nutrition and the Brain, Vol 6.* Edited by Richard J Wurtman, Judith J Wurtman. (Pp 292; \$56.00.) New York: Raven Press, 1983.

The ability of nutritional factors to alter brain function is a fascinating area of research which could potentially affect us all in the way we select our diet. Normal brain function requires a variety of substances which cannot be synthesised within nervous tissue but which are incorporated from the diet. Many of these essential factors have been identified and their potential for altering brain function highlighted in previous volumes of this series. However, much remains unknown and in par-

ticular little attention has been given to the many substances hidden in commercially produced foods such as colourings and other permitted additives.

The present volume is unfortunately rather mixed in its approach to the physiological and behavioural effects of food constituents. The initial chapter is highly specialised dealing in particular with the pharmacology of methylxanthines and caffeine. This is followed by an intriguing insight into the workings of the FDA in regulating neuro-effective food additives. Attention is subsequently focused on the possible behavioural and cognitive effects of diet in children and on the question of what governs our selection of food. Finally, an important question related to brain function is discussed, namely the ability of dietary amino acid precursors to regulate monoamine transmission in brain.

While many intriguing facets of nutrition are discussed, this is not good general reading as a single volume. The individual contributions are excellent but they do not marry well together. However, as part of the series *Nutrition and the Brain*, the work will find itself on many library shelves.

PETER JENNER

Atlas of Pediatric Neurosurgical Techniques. By Francisco J Villarejo. (Pp 224; \$89.25.) Basel: Karger, 1984.

Operative neurosurgery books appear upon the market at a steady rate. Clearly they attract a sufficient number of buyers, or the publishers would not undertake the considerable expense of producing them. They certainly satisfy the needs of those neurosurgeons who feel they must attempt the very difficult task of committing to paper their methods of operating. How well they satisfy the needs of others, is however, a different matter. Surgeons derive their expertise from a mixture, in varying proportions, of watching, listening, reading, assisting, but mainly from (sometimes painfully acquired) experience. For the sake of the patient this complex process must be as speedy as possible; hence the possible value of books such as this. Dr Villarejo was at an early stage interested in paediatric neurosurgery and, as has always been essential, travelled far and wide to acquire his knowledge.

Within the unavoidable limits imposed by the printed page, this atlas succeeds in conveying a clear idea of the author's methods. The numerous line-drawings are diagrammatic and easily understood.

Photographs of patients, angiograms and CT scans are used to supplement the information.

That the repertoire of lesions found in the paediatric age group and the techniques needed to deal with them surgically are substantially different from those found in adult neurosurgery is very apparent from this atlas. Few neurosurgeons, whether they be experienced or not, could fail to obtain helpful instruction from these pages.

KENNETH HILL

Neurocardiology. The Interrelationship between Dysfunction in the Nervous Cardiovascular System. (MPN Vol 13.) By Ralph M Johnson, David G Lambie and John MK Spalding. (Pp 408; £19.50.) London: WB Saunders Co, 1984.

In 1974, Johnson and Spalding performed an importance service when they wrote one of the first comprehensive accounts of the clinical disorders of the autonomic nervous system: they successfully brought together in a readable and scholarly way much information which was hitherto only available in separate journals. Now 10 years later and aided by a third author, Dr Lambie they have succeeded again. This book entitled *Neurocardiology and subtitled The inter-relationship between dysfunction in the nervous and cardiovascular system*, is sub-divided into major sections. The first analyses the normal and abnormal control of the cardiovascular system by the nervous system and is mainly a welcome revision and expansion of much of their first book. To give an example of the progress in this field, their chapter on orthostatic hypotension which is still the presenting symptom of many autonomic disorders requires more than 200 references to recent work. They discuss controversies concerning the classification of progressive autonomic failure which has been clarified by the availability of plasma catecholamine assays and rigorous clinical testing as well as by the newly available receptor binding studies. The wide range of drug treatments they review is merely a reflection of the great difficulties that remain in the management of these disorders. In addition to the progressive disorders of unknown cause they discuss fully diabetes and also alcoholism in which they have recently taken a particular interest. The more complex problems of the cardiovascular responses to emotion and pain are also discussed. As in their earlier book they enliven their text with quotations from