book opens with chapters on history taking and the clinical examination. Sections follow on each of the major diagnostic groupings. There are chapters on child and adolescent psychiatry, psychogeriatrics, forensic psychiatry and psychopharmacology.

The style is brisk as befits the size and scope of the book. The approach is traditional mainstream clinical psychiatry with an emphasis on biological forms of treatment. Occasional pronouncements appear idiosyncratic. Few would nowadays advocate the use of projection tests to assess personality; nor the Minnesota Multiple Personality Inventory (MMPI) for that matter. Syphilitic serology is hardly necessary in every patient. Attempts to simplify sometimes mislead; dementia is not necessarily progressive nor is it always irreversible. Also it is a pity, having a mind in particular to the direction in which psychiatry is moving, that the author did not describe the role of psychiatry in the general hospital setting.

These reservations notwithstanding, this is a book that can be confidently recommended to the total novice. The more ambitious student will seek out something more substantial.

BK TOONE


This is a record of the proceedings of the second workshop on neurotransmitters and epilepsy (WONIEP II), which was held in San Antonio, Texas in April 1983. The primary aim of these meetings is to foster interaction between basic scientists and clinicians interested in the role of neurotransmitters in epilepsy. It contains some 30 articles. Some of these represent reviews, others communications of original research. Each contribution is followed by a short discussion. The major part of the book is concerned with the pharmacology of gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA). Half a dozen papers deal with involvement of cholinergic, neuropeptide, and excitatory amino-acid systems. Only three papers have any direct clinical relevance, two of which deal with gabergic enzymes, receptors and GABA levels in surgical specimens of human brain, and one a short review of clinical trials undertaken with GABA receptor agonists (THIP and Progabide).

The main virtue of the book is in presenting an up to date "state of the art" which is available in a single volume. Clinicians cannot fail to be impressed by the enormous amount of careful animal work being undertaken which is leading to an enormous increase in our understanding of the basic pharmacology of GABA in particular. However, those articles on excitatory amino-acids such as aspartate and glutamate may well be an important pointer to the future. The make-up of the book, however, emphasises the yawning gap that exists between animal experimentation and clinical application of the information gained. In particular, only Dr Schmidt seri- ous addresses the question of the relevance of animal models of seizures to the enormous range and variability of the human epilepsies. Whilst this problem was the one highlighted by the first workshop in this series, the second workshop seems to have ignored it.

Some criticisms have to be made of the quality of production of what is quite an expensive book. The technique used has obviously been a photographic one. This results in varying typefaces which produce with variable quality. Some of the illustrations, particularly of autoradiographs, are so poor as to be totally meaningless. The transcript of the final discussion is nothing short of appalling, and it seems that on one page different typefaces have been used! In general, whilst some of the comments made during discussion are helpful a much tighter editing of the discussions would have been helpful in the production of the book.

The book will largely be of value to those neurologists with some interest in epilepsy who wish to keep up to date with developments in basic sciences. They will find the review articles in this book particularly helpful and one or two of the more original articles very illuminating (for example that of Gale emphasising the importance of regional and compartmental changes in gabergic function). They will, however, find some of the reports of original research at times repetitive, and variably presented. Undoubtedly, some of these manuscripts, produced in time for the deadline of the meeting, will appear in refereed journals in due course, and be presented in a more satisfactory manner.

DW CHADWICK


The Patient Handbook series is written for the general public and aims to give expert advice on those questions most commonly asked about symptoms, treatment, sources of help and other aspects of the conditions covered. A book on depression is very welcome and should strengthen a range of titles short on psychological subjects.

The series is clearly aimed at those who are more intelligent and articulate and the authors, expert in their own fields, sometimes find it hard to give up their particular forms of jargon. In this volume, Professor Goldberg is very careful to explain the meaning of the difficult terms he uses but some of them might have been omitted without any loss of clarity.

The book discusses the nature of depression, its causes, possible treatments and sources of help for the affected person. The nature of depression, is, of course, an area of sustained controversy and the author steers a careful course between the various classifications, with a useful chapter on the various transition from unhappiness to depression as an illness. He widely uses the analogy of loss to illustrate his argument and I suspect that this might prove confusing to all but the very experienced. The analysis of suicidal thoughts is useful, dispelling lay myths and emphasising their importance in the management of a depressive illness.

The chapter on the causes of depression is comprehensive and should be of considerable interest, though perhaps a little repetitive. The next, on drug treatment, though difficult, would answer many of the questions asked by patients. The chapters on sources of help, include helping oneself, help from the family and professional help. They are clear, firm and reassuring, giving practical advice about each aspect. Surprisingly, though, there is no mention of the Samaritans as a source of help to sufferers whose family and GP seem unhelpful or whose distress is particularly bad at times when normal sources of support are unavailable. The discussion of the psychiatrist's role includes a section on ECT with a curious description of the electric current being passed through the scalp with the effect on the brain as an after thought. Whilst the main bulk of the book would be acceptable to most eclectic psychiatrists, the sections on psychotherapy is perhaps more controversial and lead the patient to expect approaches that particular therapists might not follow.