

sideration of the heterogeneity of pain mechanisms, details of pain treatments and the problems arising directly as a result of analgesia. This is an excellent chapter, full of useful practical advice. The enigma of reflex sympathetic dystrophy is discussed by Rizzi and co-authors. The usual difficulties of definition and terminology quickly emerge, and this probably has some bearing on the surprisingly good short and long term results of treatment in their patients. In a stimulating chapter, Benedetti and Bonica draw attention to the magnitude of the cancer pain problem. Pagni reviews the numerous neurosurgical procedures for cancer pain, discussing older as well as newer operations. Only ablative procedures are considered, thalamotomy receiving a relatively brief review. It is a pity that deep brain stimulation is not considered, either here or in any other chapter; most neurosurgeons concerned with pain relief are coming to the view that in general, stimulation has more to offer than ablation, with a lower morbidity. However, results of ablation or stimulation remain unpredictable and analgesia is often disappointingly short lived. Another cause for concern is the vastly different success rates obtained by different surgeons for any particular operation. Of the two chapters on pituitary ablation, Gianasi presents the more detailed review of Moricca's technique for pain relief in advanced widespread cancer.

There is much of interest and practical value in this book. However, it is over inclusive of topics not directly relevant to pain management which are adequately covered both in this series of books and in other easily accessible sources.

JW SCADDING

Psychiatry, Human Rights and the Law. Edited by Martin Roth and Robert Buglass. (Pp 241; £27.50.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.

This volume contains contributions made to a conference held in September 1983, shortly before the introduction of the Mental Health Act in England and Wales. It contains contributions from many countries and includes a review of the changes in the Mental Health Act, and the problems arising in the USA and other countries with the increased emphasis on dangerousness as the reason for committal; lessons to be learnt from the Italian experiences, and the many knotty philosophical and practical issues concerned with the care of those who have broken the law

and are also mentally ill. All the contributions are of a high quality and from those who are experts in the field. The longest and most extensive contribution is by Professor Margaret Sommerville of the faculty of Law and the faculty of Medicine, McGill University. This is really a broad review of changes in mental health legislations and the varying emphasis which is put on different issues in different countries. Of crucial importance to British psychiatrists and their patients is the emphasis on "health or safety" as a reason for compulsory admission, rather than "serious dangerousness". As Professor Sommerville states, the latter approach is justified under the States "police power" whereas the former can be justified under the power of the State as a "good parent". One hopes that psychiatrists may still be viewed as good parents rather than as policemen in their ordinary clinical work. The consequences of the police approach is graphically illustrated in a case described by Professor Alan Stone; a young student who became obviously mentally ill at a University but refused to become dangerous, and the distress that the situation caused to himself and those concerned with his care. This volume can be strongly recommended to doctors of all sorts, to those working in the legal profession and to anybody concerned with human rights.

JLT BIRLEY

Panic: Facing Fears, Phobias and Anxiety. By Stewart Agras. (Pp 151; £22.95 h/b; £13.95 p/b.) Oxford: WH Freeman & Co Ltd, 1985.

This, to quote the jacket cover, is "a provocative book for the general reader and psychologist and is indispensable reading for phobia sufferers and their friends and families". When I read this I usually shudder as it is impossible to cater simultaneously for patients, their therapists and the general reader. My doubts were intensified after reading the first chapter on the "territory of fear" that tells us that "a panic attack is an intense burst of anxiety accompanied by marked physiological uproar" and that "common fears are a biological implant aimed at protecting the young against possible injury". The next chapter dwells at length on cardiac aspects of the panic attack and includes a frightening picture of the heart to illustrate mitral valve prolapse, which in America is still felt to be closely related to panic disorder. The poor patient who thinks he might be suffering from panic will then have it confirmed when he reads that his chance of death from heart disease and

stroke is double that of ordinary people. After this dramatic introduction, which no doubt would be described as flooding by the behavioural psychologist, the reader will be tempted to close the book in fright.

This will be a pity, because although Professor Agras continues to make simple things complicated—"certain classes of visual and auditory events activate a biologically endowed learning mechanism"—he does give a comprehensive and useful account of present thinking about phobias, obsessions, panic and their pharmacological and psychological treatments. I had to admire him for the courage with which he tackled subjects that would tax the most illuminating of teachers. We move from a detailed discussion of the phobias of Little Hans to the behavioural theories of JB Watson, and then to a simplified account of brain neurochemistry and neurotransmitters. We are treated to a discussion of Gray's septohippocampal theory of anxiety and an account of benzodiazepine receptors (in which the analogy of space capsules docking a satellite is used to explain the specificity of receptors). The reader is then whisked away to current treatments for phobias and panic in which the transition from psychodynamic to behavioural and medical treatments is made felicitously without any apparent consistency.

The text is enlivened by some clever cartoons illustrating the most germane points. The artist is not acknowledged and may be related to Professor Agras himself.

In summary this book fails to live up to its impossible expectations but nonetheless gives a comprehensive and fair account of the nature and treatments of this group of often disabling conditions. It will make a admirable reading for a patient who is grounded in the basic biological sciences and will also be useful reading for students of both sociology and psychiatry. I am still bothered about the first two chapters; I hope that they do not lead to a new condition: agrapophobia.

PETER TYRRELL

Headache. Diagnostic System and Taxonomic Criteria. By G Nappi and F Savonni. (Pp 116; £17.50.) London: John Libbey & Co Ltd, 1985.

This new book on headache is introduced by a preface written by Frederigo Sicuti which is lavish in personal praise of its authors from the Pavia school in Italy. Alessandro Agnoli follows with a foreword of flowery but quite enchanting prose but concludes: "the headache sufferer will continue