pyramidal and cerebellar systems, the peripheral nerves and muscles, the sensory system and certain mechanical tests.

Many pictures are shown but these are inferior to those found in the Medical Research Council's *Aids to the Examination of the Peripheral Nervous System* which is only one eighteenth of the price. The authors give details of many common examination techniques with some useful tips, for example the early signs of a pyramidal fault. Some explanations seem unclear, such as in the sections on hemifacial spasm and the action of the accessory nerve. The outdated classification for levels of consciousness is used with no mention of the International Coma Scale. The descriptions of the extraocular movements, nystagmus and pupillary function are poor and these are covered in a much better way in Ross' *How to Examine the Nervous System* for the same price.

Although this work contains much useful information I found it disappointing. Furthermore I thought the topics were already covered in a better way in other works which gave more value for money.

T FOWLER


This is Volume 10 in a series called *Progress in Clinical Neurophysiology*, which has so far treated topics as various as language and hemispheric specialisation, supraspinal motor control, and the clinical uses of evoked potentials. The aim of the book under review, in the words of its distinguished editor, is to answer the question: “How could a minicomputer facilitate and upgrade my daily electromyography (EMG) practice?”, a question to which the wary response of this reviewer is “not at all”. The dilemma is an old one: that the seemingly worthwhile effort to make EMG “a fully automated process, so that the intervention of the electromyographer may be extremely reduced”, as one contributor to this volume puts it, is apt to lead to results which are unhelpful, misleading or merely fatuous unless tempered by the subtle corrections and allowances made by experienced hand, eye and brain in the course of each neurophysiological examination. How far do the 13 commissioned chapters in this book, written by leading practitioners in the field, neurologists, neurophysiologists, electronics engineers and computer experts, go towards allaying doubt, advancing our practice and improving the help we give patients?

The book is worth acquiring for two chapters alone, which constitute a third of its length. These are the masterly review of power spectrum analysis by Lindström and Petersen from Gothenburg, and the vigorous and imaginative account of computer systems used in Uppsala, by Stålberg and Antoni. Anyone sufficiently interested to give these chapters the attention they deserve will not rest until he has visited the laboratories concerned. Indeed there are other chapters from Gothenburg, dealing with power spectrum analysis in children, data processing in ergonomics, and advances in the myoelectric control of multifunctional prostheses. On more familiar clinical ground Hayward from Liverpool and the Warszaw duo of Kopiec and Hausmanowa-Petrusewicz give useful accounts of the methods over which they have laboured these many years. Sadly, in neither case has a method of wide appeal emerged, useful though each has been to its progenitors. Among the other chapters of technical interest are those by Andreasen on motor unit firing, Meyer and Hilfiker on computerized motor neurography and Mambrito and de Luca on *Acquisition and Decomposition* of the EMG signal.

In short, this is a well-produced book in which everyone engaged in trying to automate the EMG will find something valuable, or even invaluable. The clinical electromyographer trying to decide whether a pain in the hand is due to arthritis, nerve compression, both or neither, must be allowed a measure of friendly scepticism.

The writing varies, as might be expected, from the lucid to the impenetrable. It should surely be part of an editor’s function to discourage the use of, or even expunge, a phrase such as “optimize the decision parameters”.

J PAYAN


Inevitably the first reaction must be surprise that such a weighty monograph running to over seven hundred pages can be devoted to the subject of myoclonus. But this book, the latest in the *Advances in Neurology* series, is a rewarding addition to the literature of a complex disorder that has long suffered from problems of classification and definition.

Fahn, Marsden and Van Woert have brought together a powerful team of contributors. Myoclonus starts with a large section devoted to clinical aspects taking in myoclonus epilepsy, essential myoclonus, and myoclonus associated with degenerative diseases of the cerebellum. There are valuable sections on asterixis, post hypoxic myoclonus, restless legs syndrome and a fascinating contribution on excessive startle symptoms. Palatal myoclonus and spinal myoclonus are fully reviewed but it seems scarcely justified to include chapters on preliminary experience of the use of Lisuride or Piracetam in the treatment of myoclonus.

The section devoted to electrophysiological aspects of myoclonus must remain disappointing since we seem as far as ever from any detailed understanding of the electrical mechanisms underlying this phenomenon. But this is probably because the most important progress in this subject has been the appreciation in the last twenty or thirty years that biochemical mechanisms, and particularly the serotonergic system have a fundamental role in the genesis of myoclonus. The last three sections of this book will prove an invaluable source of reference material and up to date review for the researcher worker. The brain serotonin system is described in detail (and it is noteworthy that nearly all the work reviewed has been carried out in the last ten years) and the criticism of this book that many of the methods and mechanisms underlying myoclonus and its pharmacology still want elucidation. But the final section reviews the mechanisms of action of clonazepam, valproic acid and other drugs in the treatment of myoclonus.

One cannot help feeling at the end of this book that we stand on the threshold of a proper understanding of this rare but fascinating phenomenon. This detailed review of the subject is timely because it brings together so much recent progress in our understanding of the condition, and it once again emphasises the momentum in neurology towards research into the biochemical and neuropharmacological basis of brain disorder.

*Myoclonus* deserves a place as an up to date reference work in departments of neurology and university libraries, and should be accessible to research workers and neurologists investigating serotonin mechanisms of advising on the management of unusual seizure or movement disorders.

RB GODWIN-AUSTEN