this should be a book reviewing the area or chapters presenting new data. For example, there is an excellent review on the molecular biology approach to inherited disorders which is a very useful introduction to those of falter at the language of molecular biology and the relevance to Alzheimer’s disease is immediately obvious despite the fact that it only occupies one paragraph. On the other hand there were chapters, for example that on soluble and membrane bound form of choline acetyltransferase, which presents data in the standard journal form. This inconsistency in approach detracts from some of the very good review chapters in the book. There are now many publications concerning Alzheimer’s disease and the recent rapid advances render many of these publications obsolete. To lay claim to attention a book on Alzheimer’s disease needs to be published rapidly or to provide a coherent overview. Although there are some excellent articles in this book the lack of coherence is a disadvantage.

MN ROSSOR


The results of the treatment of patients with malignant brain tumours remains depressingly poor. This is not to say, however, that no improvement has been made in recent years; both the quantity and quality of survival in these patients can be enhanced by appropriate and often multidisciplinary treatment. There is a need for all those involved in neuro-oncology to be well informed of modern developments throughout the specialty. This book, which has the declared aim of presenting the “state of the art of brain tumour therapy” goes some way to fulfilling this need.

The treatment sections begin with a brief, 30 page outline of neurosurgical techniques but these are not discussed in detail and the results of surgery alone are confined to just two pages.

Radiation treatment is dealt with in more detail. After an introduction to the basic physics and radiobiology in which there are errors (for example, dose does not define the amount of radiation emitted by a source) the chapter improves. There are section covering general radiotherapeutic techniques and reviews of the treatment of individual tumour types follow. Each tumour section ends with recommendations for its manage-ment and these would find agreement in many UK radiotherapy departments. Strangely, primary CNS lymphoma is entirely omitted whilst histologically non malignant tumours (pituitary adenoma, craniopharyngioma, meningioma) are included and are generally well treated.

The chapter on stereotactic biopsy and interstitial radiation is a very personal account by Dr F Mundinger of this technique which is still little used worldwide.

Although chemotherapy has a relatively minor role in the management of brain tumours its presentation here occupies 120 pages, four times the space allocated to surgery! Two authors provide a comprehensive introduction to the special problems of treating the CNS with cytotoxic drugs whilst a second pair of authors complete the section with a review of the results of chemotherapy.

The book is completed with an introductory chapter on pathology and a final chapter on paediatric neuro-oncology which is perhaps the most successful in the whole volume.

My main criticisms of this book are its lack of balance and the lack of cohesion between its chapters. It reads like what it is, a collection of separate contributions written separately. There is little attempt to merge them into a unified approach to brain tumour therapy. I also find it strange that there is no chapter on the imaging of brain tumours, changes in which have contributed so much to their management in recent years. Neither is much made of the symptomatic management of the patient; this is indeed a book on the therapy of “tumours”.

These reservations apart however, some of the chapters are very good. All are extremely well referenced—more than 2000 in all. They make good reading for the trainee in oncology or for those, already established, who want to learn more about the techniques of their colleagues. The book is nicely presented with good diagrams and plentiful clear illustrations throughout, though many spelling mistakes remain. It would make a worthwhile addition to the specialist library.

R RAMPLING


The use of evoked potential (EP) techniques to monitor afferent CNS pathways during surgery has increased greatly over the last decade. In certain situations, for example spinal surgery for the correction of kyphoscoliosis, monitoring of somatosensory evoked potentials is virtually mandatory for medicolegal reasons in the USA and there seems little reason to suppose that this will not happen in Britain too. The great expansion in the field in the USA has led to many personnel other than clinical neurophysiologists and trained EEG technicians working with EPs and it is to these groups, especially anaesthetists, surgeons and operating room nurses that this volume is directed.

The book is composed of a short, sensible introduction and six main chapters. The first of these briefly reviews basic electrophysiological aspects of evoked potentials before going on to a more detailed and very helpful review of recording equipment. This section deals with electrodes, amplifiers and filters including uses and abuses of the “notch” filter, followed by discussion of averaging techniques, an important and practical guide to artefact in the operating theatre and finally safety aspects. A long chapter on lower limb SEP techniques and spinal cord monitoring, by far the best-established EP monitoring technique, is followed by chapters on upper limb SEPs, auditory evoked potentials and visual evoked potentials during surgery. All of these chapters deal briefly with the well known applications of EPs in clinical neurology (these tend to be termed “out-patient EPs” by the author) in addition to providing detailed information on stimulus and recording techniques, for example epidural versus interspinous ligament SEP recordings. Anaesthetic effects and changes due to other factors such as temperature, blood pressure and pupil diameter are all described as appropriate for the stimulus modality. The final chapter deals with some aspects of basic science including lesion studies and effects of ischaemia and mechanical cord injury, as well as transcortical motor stimulation.

It is of course notoriously difficult to prove or quantify the benefits to the patient from peroperative monitoring—a double blind trial is impossible and when as in scoliosis surgery, morbidity is low anyway, large numbers of patients would be necessary to prove advantages. A stable EP may reassure the surgeon but it might also encourage him to remove more of a cord tumour than he would otherwise, with possible benefits and risks from this. To some extent this book takes what might be termed a North American view in that it answers the question “how does one monitor” rather