

arecholine or THA, although their value is of a small order. Certain statements will evoke protest or frank disbelief: "The removal of meningiomas is fatal in half of all cases . . ."

Professor Giaquinto has written an excellent and original monograph. It testifies to the singular virtues of the one man work in its clear writing, literary illusions and unquestionable scholarship. I hope he eventually produces a second edition, in which a few extra pages might provide us with a more balanced coverage. I hope the idiosyncrasies of a single author work are not thereby obscured. Strongly recommended.

JMS PEARCE

**Textbook of Epilepsy.** 3rd ed. Edited by John Laidlaw, Alan Richens, Jolyon Oxley. (Pp 644; £60.00.) Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone, 1988.

This will be a valuable reference work for neurologists, psychiatrists and paediatricians. Epilepsy is covered widely, from the pharmacokinetics of anticonvulsant drugs on one hand to the educational, employment and legal problems faced by patients on the other. The well organised and accessible section on the pharmacology of anticonvulsant drugs by Rimmer and Richens will prove invaluable to those of us who have difficulty memorising copious pharmacological details. Marsden and Reynold's clear prose transmits an authoritative account of "seizures in adults" which will repay reading by medical students and consultant neurologists alike. Wallace, a new contributor to the book, provides an admirably comprehensive, although lengthy account of the varied seizure types encountered in paediatric practice. Polkey has written a valuable account of the considerations underlying the surgical treatment of epilepsy interspersed with some illuminating asides based on his own extensive clinical experience of such patients.

The third edition has recruited Dr J Oxley to the editorship. It is a more even book than the previous edition due no doubt to the editors' sagacity in combining an increased range of subject matter with a reduction in the number of contributors. The coverage of epilepsy in developing countries has been expanded; this will do little to improve the book as far as most British and North American neurologists are concerned and presumably is designed to widen its international appeal. Cleland and Espir's

coverage of "some aspects of epilepsy in women" is a welcome and much needed addition to the book. Problems relating to pregnancy, contraception and possible catamenial influences in epileptics are common and interesting aspects of any neurologist's out-patient practice. Notably these authors are less concerned about the teratogenic potential of sodium valproate than other authorities have recently been.<sup>1</sup>

Clinicians will reach for a particular textbook as a matter of habit if they find it provides ready answers to difficult or obscure questions. I was surprised that this book did not mention porphyria which is a recognised metabolic precipitant of seizures, a diagnostic consideration in status epilepticus and a consequence of enzyme induction by most anticonvulsant drugs. Of course porphyria itself is rare, and its epileptic consequences rarer still. But a large textbook should cover such rarities and, for instance, advice that valproate and clonazepam are the anticonvulsants of choice in patients susceptible to porphyria. Despite these quibbles, this is a good and useful book which now faces competition in the British market.

M DONAGHY

#### Reference

- 1 Dalassio DJ. Seizure disorders in pregnancy. *N Engl J Med* 1985;312:559-63.

**Ultrastructural Study of the Human Diseased Peripheral Nerve.** 2nd ed. By Claude Vital, Jean-Michel Vallat. (Pp 289; \$58.00.) Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1987.

This second edition is a considerable improvement, both in presentation and content, on the previous volume. In 18 generously illustrated chapters the authors describe the main ultrastructural features of peripheral neuropathy. Very wisely they begin by giving the reader some advice about the use of peripheral nerve biopsy as well as about the techniques for performing it.

The first chapters on the morphology and development of the nerve are particularly welcome mainly if one considers that the readership will certainly include beginners in the field who will need to refer to normal features and to know the origin of the

various components of the nerve in order to understand the pathological processes.

Chapter 3 which deals with the morphometry should, in my opinion, have included more information. As it stands, it can only hint at the complexity of the subject and its invaluable contribution to the diagnosis of numerous peripheral neuropathies.

The many illustrations in Chapter 5 thoroughly complete the text in giving a satisfactory account of the basic pathological features. This is followed by other chapters in which the lesions in specific neuropathies are described. In these the reader can appreciate, on one hand, how much progress has been made in recent years towards the understanding of peripheral neuropathies (I refer among others to the group of diseases associated with dysglobulinaemia) or, on the other hand, the amount of work still to be done before the pathogenesis of some lesions can be fully understood; this applies particularly to diabetic neuropathy and in the relevant chapter the reader will find an up-to-date account of various possibilities. However, amyloidosis is dealt with rather briefly and one would have liked more details and information on a subject, the importance of which extends well beyond the peripheral nerve.

In conclusion, this is a book which will certainly be appreciated for focusing our attention on many problems related to peripheral nerve pathology and also for the numerous illustrations of good quality. These are assets which, coupled with a rich and updated bibliography and the low price, will certainly make us forgive the sometimes unclear text and repetitions and imprecisions of legends.

F SCARAVILLI