Book reviews

compiled by some 50 contributors from six countries. It fulfils a special need for coverage in depth of the most common form of neuropathy in Europe and the United States of America. For the clinician there are excellent sections in the first two thirds carefully outlining the extent of neuropathic complications, their presentation, investigation and treatment. In particular the difficulties in determining the incidence and the basis for making the diagnosis (whether on clinical symptoms, signs, electrophysiological findings or combinations) are discussed. The classification and clinical features are well covered and there is special emphasis on autonomic involvement, with extensive sections by appropriate experts on the tests available, their clinical application and treatment.

The problems posed in treatment by metabolic control are discussed and there are sections on experimental work with myo-inositol supplements and aldose reductase inhibitors. The final section covers experimental work with extensive discussion of the pathophysiology relating both to pathological observations in man and laboratory work with animal models.

It is difficult to single out particular sections for many chapters are excellent although Peter Dyck's contribution on pathology is masterly. Inevitably there is some repetition (even identical figures) and perhaps a brief overall summary of the experimental work would help the clinician, but these are minor criticisms.

It purports to be an overview of diabetic neuropathy and succeeds in this aim. The work is well set out, has up to date references, and will I expect be the definitive monograph on diabetic neuropathy. It should prove most useful not only for the practising neurologist, but also the diabetic physician and the neurophysiologist. I recommend it highly.

T FOWLER

Psychiatric Aspects of Epilepsy. Edited by Dietrich Blumer. (Pp 345; £25.00.) Washington: American Psychiatric Press; UK: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

The relationship between epilepsy and mental disorders has been a source of great interest and controversy since the first literature on "the sacred disease". Until the beginning of this century the dominant view was that epilepsy was inevitably accompanied by lunacy or deterioration in intellect

or personality. Indeed it is only in the last 30 or 40 years that epilepsy per se, that is, without deterioration, has finally been dropped from most international or national classifications of mental disorders. In this century interest in the psychiatry of epilepsy has declined as the primarily neurological nature of epilepsy has been more accepted and in association with the increasing separation of neurology and psychiatry. Furthermore the studies of Lennox in the 1930s first showed that most epileptic patients have normal mental states. However, in more recent years there has been renewed interest in this subject in view of the more modern epidemiological studies which suggest that one-third or more of epileptic subjects may have significant psychological disorders and in view of some of the overlapping phenomena of certain types of seizures and some psychological disorders. Interest has been renewed also in view of the relationship between specific seizure disorders, such as temporal lobe epilepsy, and certain psychiatric problems such as psychoses or personality change. Such considerations led in 1981 to the publication of a multi-author British textbook on epilepsy and psychiatry¹. This has now been followed by an all American multi-author work on psychiatric aspects of epilepsy.

As the title implies this is not a comprehensive textbook and there is surprisingly little overlap with its British counterpart. The editor provides an excellent and detailed historical introduction on the *Psychiatric Dimension of Epilepsy*. This is followed by another fine *Epidemiologic Overview of Epilepsy* by Zielinski. The chapters on *Neurological Aspects* (Niedermeyer) and *Medical Treatment* (Rodin) would grace any standard book on epilepsy. We then come to the five more specifically psychiatric chapters. Two of these deal with behavioural aspects of temporal lobe epilepsy (Bear *et al*) and temporal lobe surgery (Earl Walker and Blumer), one with psychosis (Ferguson and Rayport), one with major mood disorders related to epileptic changes (Himmelhoch) and one with pseudoepileptic seizures (Rodin). The latter is the least controversial. Rodin refers the reader to other recent reviews and bases his chapter on his own considerable experience. Since an electrophysiological study by the Gibbs' in 1948 first suggested an association between anterior temporal discharges and personality disorder arguments have raged inconclusively about whether there are specific psychological consequences of temporal lobe epilepsy. Bear and colleagues, with the aid of detailed case studies, favour

the hypothesis and believe that "the interictal behavioural syndrome is a frequent and specific consequence of limbic epileptic discharge". However, this is a less than balanced summary of the evidence and scant attention is paid to the studies of fellow American Dr Janice Stevens over the last 30 years who comes to rather different conclusions. Psychoses of epilepsy have always generated interest out of proportion to their frequency in view of the potential for illuminating non-epileptic psychoses. Here the arguments have arisen from differing Anglo-Saxon and European viewpoints, much of it based on terminological confusion, as emphasised by Ferguson and Rayport. The most controversial chapter is by Himmelhoch who reports that 10% of patients attending an affective disorders clinic have subictal or interictal mood disorders. Although claiming to break new ground it is in fact in line with a centuries old tradition of associating anything vaguely paroxysmal with epilepsy and will, I suspect, be unconvincing to most psychiatrists. It is a pity the book does not address the very common problem of depression in epileptic patients attending epilepsy clinics or in the community. Finally, there is a delightful chapter by the late Dr Geschwind on *Dostoevsky's Epilepsy*.

In summary, for those interested in history, epidemiology and the most controversial aspects of the psychiatry of epilepsy this book can be warmly recommended but for a more balanced and comprehensive view of the subject I advise the reader to consult both the British and American books.

EH REYNOLDS

Reference

- 1 Epilepsy and Psychiatry, edited by EH Reynolds and MR Trimble. Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone, 1981.

Epilepsy: Progress in Treatment. Edited by Mogens Dam, Svein I Johannessen, Bengt Nilsson, Matti Sillanpaa. (Pp 290; £37.00.) Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 1987.

This is yet another compilation of the papers read at an international symposium, this time a symposium held in November 1986 in Goslar, West Germany, the purpose of which was "To discuss the state of the art in the treatment of epilepsy". The neurologists and paediatricians who took part in this