Book reviews

AIDS: Pathogenesis and Treatment (Immunology Series Vol 44). Edited by Jay A Levy. (Pp 668; \$119.50.) New York: Marcel Dekker. 1988.

This is a well produced multiauthored general textbook on AIDS with abundant references up to well into 1988. Its editor is well known for contributions in the field of virology of AIDS and thirty of the thirty six authors work in San Francisco, the epicentre of the AIDS epidemic in the West. The book is aimed at researchers, clinicians and incoming students in the field and its purpose is to review the history and the many aspects of the disease.

There are twenty one chapters covering epidemiological, virological, immunological, pathological and clinical aspects. The short, well balanced, account of central nervous system disorders by Levy *et al* is intended for the generalist. Peripheral nervous system involvement is not dealt with and does not even appear in the index. Neurologists will find the various chapters on other systemic manifestations useful as overviews.

Many aspects of pathogenesis are discussed in depth but they are also made entertaining by tracing the development of concepts and major discoveries. In this respect the editor's chapter on the detection and pathogenesis of human immunodeficiency virus is outstanding. The chapters on molecular biology of HIV infection by Robson and on immunology by Krowka *et al* are clear and easier to read for the non initiated than is usual for these topics. The central section of the book seemed strongest, but this opinion may only reflect the bias of the clinical reviewer. The chapter on epidemiology made interesting reading and those on AIDS in Africa and Haiti made as much as is possible of the relative paucity of reliable clinical (as opposed to serological) data in these areas. AIDS in haemophilia, heterosexuals, transfusion recipients and children all receive separate chapters. The one on transfusion recipients is particularly clear and also courageous in pointing out the role of homosexual donors in the spread of the disease via this route.

The clinical sections abound in useful information, from a comprehensive review of the persistent lymphadenopathy syndrome and thrombocytopenic purpura by Abrams through lymphomas, Kaposi's sarcoma, pulmonary complications, hairy leucoplakia and other oral syndromes and various infections. The section on pathology seemed the weakest. Chapter on care systems used in San Francisco and on the prospects of developing a vaccine close the book. Clinical

readers on this side of the Atlantic will note the lack of chapters on the ophthalmological, dermatological and gastroenterological manifestations. It may reflect the pattern of services in San Francisco since some of the topics in these specialties are scattered through the text, including descriptions of individual opportunistic infections. Even so, it results in some notorious omissions and lack of balance in the presentation of important clinical information. For example, CMV retinitis and cotton wool spots receive just three paragraphs.

After reading the book, those who work with AIDS patients will want to have obtained some idea as to why AIDS has spread within the male homosexual community in the West so devastatingly, so that over 70% of the patients reported belong to this risk group. This biological fact is central to any theory on pathogenesis. However this is not dealt with in any systematic way. This glaring omission is, unexpectedly, pointed out by one of the contributors when discussing CMV infections. After concluding that a major route of acquisition of CMV infections is exposure of the anorectal mucosa to CMV infected semen, Drew states that the same considerations apply to HIV transmission. He then refers to another chapter, which does not exist, so that the quotation literally says "(see Chapter ??)" (page 513).

Despite these criticisms the book should appeal to a wide audience as intended by the editor. It should be available in medical libraries but clinicians and researchers with a special interest in AIDS may wish to have their own copy.

RJ GUILOFF

Amaurosis Fugax. Edited by E F Bernstein. (Pp 480; DM 138.) Berlin: Springer, 1988.

This book was produced after the meeting in 1987 of an invited group of thirty five neurologists, ophthalmologists and surgeons from both sides of the Atlantic. The stated aim of the editor was "to try and synthesize a common approach to the study, diagnosis and treatments of patients . . . with amaurosis fugax", and the views of the group were presented as a "consensus statement". It is rather unusual to turn what I presume to be the position papers presented at the meeting into a formal textbook. Nevertheless, a single text which deals with ocular vascular anatomy, the pathophysiology, clinical features, natural history, differential diagnosis, investigation and treatment of amaurosis fugax is to be welcomed since, in many larger books, this condition tends to be

treated as a minor variant of cerebral TIAs. A drawback is that the degree of detail varies quite markedly between the 21 chapters with some controversial areas being discussed in great depth even if they are not encountered frequently in patients with amaurosis fugax. For example, almost 15 per cent of the book is devoted to discussing the relevance of carotid atheroma to chronic ocular ischemia and to the use of the term venous stasis retinopathy.

There is rather more repetition than is usual even in multi-authored texts although it could be argued that this reflects areas of consensus amongst the authors. However, the duplication of four figures in chapters 1 and 8 and the three photographs of a cherry-red spot, despite being of the same high quality as the other illustrations, add little to one's understanding of the text but probably significantly to the price. The consensus statement is a fashionable way of attracting both medical and media attention to the problems of implementing treatments of proven value e.g. coronary artery bypass grafting. However, I do not think the same technique can be used to try and establish the place of a treatment of as yet unproven value, such as carotid endarterectomy. The opposing views on this issue have arisen because of a lack of unbiased evidence; and simply putting the proponents in the same room without significant new data is unlikely to result in many converts to either side. Almost inevitably, the group did not produce a clear statement on the indications for this procedure. On the other hand, one would have no hesitation in recommending the well written "consensus statements" on pathophysiology, aetiology, differential diagnosis and investigation to any student or membership candidate.

Many of the chapters contain extensive references to both seminal papers and recent articles, in many cases written by the authors, making it a useful book to dip into. This is helped by the comprehensive index. It is for the well funded library rather than the personal collection.

JOHN BAMFORD

Leonard of Bertapaglia: On Nerve Injuries and Skull Fractures. MD Ladenheim. (Pp 154; \$39.00.) New York Futura Publishing Co. 1989.

This volume is number 52 in the *History of Medicine* series issued under the auspices of the library of New York Academy of Medicine. It is based upon a manuscript from the Riccardian Library in Florence.

Bertapaglia is a small town close to Padua and since Leonard enrolled as a medical student in Padua in 1400 or 1402 his birth-date was just around six hundred years ago. Leonard of Bertapaglia is not a name which readily trips off the lips of those of us who have a passing, rather than a great interest in the early surgery of the nervous system, but it is remarkable to observe that this work was published, firstly in manuscript and then put into print and actively used seventy years later.

The book is laid out with an interesting introduction and concluding commentary. There is a glossary/pharmacopoeia at the end which is of interest. The greater part of the book consists of chapters with the mediaeval Latin on the left and the translation on the right. The book might be of interest to someone with a close involvement in mediaeval history and indeed the work of the compiler shows attention to detail and obvious affection for the task in hand. For those of us who are not concerned so much with linguistic details or quaint recipes, but more with the ideas and the concepts that a surgeon practising six hundred years ago might hold, the text is perhaps excessively detailed. I much prefer Spillane's *Doctrine of the Nerves* as a bedtime read.

The original author appears to have been a fairly typical neurosurgeon with a combative style which led to his occasionally needling his academic colleagues and thus not being granted his doctorate until he was seventy. He was a technically minded man and has been credited with the reintroduction of the circular trephine and also the first description of the suture/ligature.

Some of his advice reads well today and could well be taken by those who still purport to treat subdural empyema by the making of burr holes. Leonard says "should such pus occur, however, the physician should direct his attention not to a single location but to diverse areas".

Leonard also described a neat test: "there are some who have horns and they bid the patient blow, as a trumpeter blows his horn, so that the spirit or wind rises up to the patient's head. If the air from this blowing respires to the exterior of the wound, this is a manifest sign of a fractured skull". He did not have access to a sphygmomanometer and neither does he report headache occurring after horn blowing; indicating that he just missed describing the reviewer's pnktalogram test for hindbrain hernia headache.

Some other of his words have a modern ring about them and his advice appears somewhat more advanced than I can sometimes bring myself to take. For exam-

ple, when advising a patient of a lethal illness he says that the physician "must, lest the stupid criticise and calumniate him, inform the patient of the peril of death. He must say to the patient, 'Oh, my friend, compose your testaments and confess your sins to God, which will be very helpful to me and beneficial for the cure, healing your wounds the more quickly, for your mind will be at peace and your humours cleansed of strange fancies'".

Further cogent advice for the neurosurgeon is his observation that wine causes debilitation to the brain and passage of the humours to the head, which unfortunate consequence of itself, as well as the tendency of such cerebral humours to be used for needling our academic colleagues, may prevent many of us from obtaining doctorates before or even after age of seventy.

A common thought on reading accounts such as this is to wonder which of today's practices will appear, to someone reading about them in five hundred years time, quite as completely ridiculous as some of these remedies. For example the concoction of a paste or plaster: "For wondrously inverting bone fragments. Rx: Armoniac, Bdellium, Serapinum, Galbanum, Oponopnax, Resin of Myrrh of each half an ounce; Turpentine, Naval pitch, Resin of pine, Oak sap, left overs of a dish of anchovies of each three ounces; Aristolochia round and long, Dittany, Colphony, Myrrh, an ox stone, bark of Aruninacea root of each three drams; Leven, pigs fat, laurel oil of each two ounces and vinegar one ounce". It may be suspected that in another half millennium such a remedy may read rather better than advice to take the mid-brain of a mid term abortus, pronounced by the immunologists to be free of HIV and hepatitis, homogenise and inject into whichever part of the brain happens to be the target of the month, on the opposite side of the shaking palsy.

The mediaeval neurosurgeon must have suffered, albeit unknowingly from shortage of antibiotics and modern imaging but what a pleasure to get the left overs of a dish of anchovies past the Padua ethical committee or their FDA. Leonard was not much into medical audit and neither the Karnovsky nor the Glasgow outcome scale were featured. He tended to finish his sometimes outlandish recommendations with some such phrase as; "This will produce wondrous and incredible improvement". At least this sounds perfectly modern and would go as well in the Journal of Neurosurgery as in "Capitulum de Fractura Cranei".

In short this is a book more for the medical library or the serious student of history but is

nevertheless an interesting and thought provoking publication.

BERNARD WILLIAMS

Neurology of Pregnancy. 2nd Edition. By JAMES O DONALDSON. (Pp 347; £35.00.) Hagerston court Brace Jovanovich Ltd, 1989.

The first edition of this book was published in 1978 and the present volume is referenced up to 1987. It is a useful guide to the many and sometimes alarming neurological problems of pregnancy. The author seems a little uncertain of his readership as it is unlikely that anyone needing to consult this book would require, for example, a potted single page account of the clinical features of multiple sclerosis, but it is always difficult to decide what to leave out. Chapters are devoted to anatomy, peripheral neuropathy, muscle disease, movement disorders, infections, cerebrovascular disease, tumours, headache and epilepsy. Sensible measures are recommended for the control of convulsions in eclampsia but the author has felt obliged to present, with strong disapproval, a full account of the use of magnesium sulphate, apparently still favoured by some obstetricians in the USA. High blood levels of magnesium induce neuro-muscular blockade and cessation of convulsive movements, the result of paralysis, a method of treating status epilepticus now effectively outlawed as lethal.

Sound and well documented advice is given on the management of such taxing problems of pregnancy as subarachnoid haemorrhage, ischaemic stroke, cerebral tumour and suspected spinal cord compression. Professor Donaldson has evidently devoted much thought to the use of anticonvulsants in pregnancy and although his conclusions might not receive universal agreement the dilemma of foetal and maternal risks from medication or uncontrolled epilepsy is fully discussed.

This book would be a valuable addition to any neurologist's library.

W B MATTHEWS

A Colour Atlas of Multiple Sclerosis and Other Myelin Disorders. By Colin Adams. (Pp 231; £55.00.) London: Wolfe Medical, 1989.

There are many books on multiple sclerosis covering the clinical and pathological aspects of the disease and related disorders.