Book reviews

interest to clinical neurologists as well as those managing infectious diseases, virologists and also neurosurgeons and psychiatrists. The book is well produced, reasonably priced, well referenced and stimulating. It should be on the shelves of all good neurological libraries.

PGE KENNEDY

Handbook of Clinical Psychoneuroendocrinology Edited by Charles B Nemeroff & Peter T Loosen. (Pp 502; £50.00.) Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 1987.

This is a valuable reference handbook of clinical psychoneuroendocrinology. The large and rapidly growing subject is reviewed in 24 chapters. Between them they cover most of the principle findings in the field together with about 5000 key references.

Although the coverage is in general comprehensive many of the sections are lacking in critical perspective and, in general, studies are quoted together with an automatic acceptance of the authors' conclusions. The subject is now at a stage where the reader may be justified in accepting 50% of the data that are published but he should hesitate if he finds that he is accepting more than 10% of the conclusions. With this proviso the book will provide a useful introduction to the subject.

S CHECKLEY

Computing for Clinicians. By Tim Chard. (Pp 136; £18.00.) Bristol: IOP Publishing, 1988.

As the author makes clear at the outset, computers are increasingly in evidence in medicine and it is now becoming difficult to ignore them. Unfortunately, they are surrounded by a lot of obscure jargon which puts many people off learning to use one or finding out more about computing in general. In fact, as computers and particularly modern software packages have become more sophisticated and "user friendly", it has become quite unnecessary to be bothered with almost all technical matters in order to be able to use even a very powerful computer and it is refreshing to see this point made in the first few pages of the book. It is much more useful to be aware of what computers can do and the author provides this information in a concise and readable way. There is helpful information about the various types of computer system which explains what sort

of computer will perform a particular task and what sort of software will be needed. The various types of software packages are fully explained. There are also useful explanations of computing terms which will be of use to those seeking to evaluate the various technical specifications provided by the manufacturers of different machines.

Subsequent chapters cover computerised record systems, other aspects of administration including a clear account of the varieties and uses of databases; computerised diagnostic equipment; the crucial subject of transferring data into a computer and in what form; computerised diagnostic systems and the controversy surrounding their use; the use of computers in treatment and finally programs to assist in teaching and literature searches.

In the areas of diagnosis and treatment it is never suggested that computers should or could replace the human brain as in some respects they are not well suited to these tasks. However, examples of uses in these areas are presented as food for thought such as spotting rare but important drug interactions, the identification of rare syndromes or the choice of the most appropriate chemotherapy regimen according to a protocol previously fed into a computer's memory.

Some of the information, particularly the rather technical section on the computerisation of diagnostic recording equipment, is of little general interest but the author has mostly avoided this type of approach to the subject.

There has been a real need for a book like this which provides a good introduction to medical aspects of computing and is probably more than most of us will ever need to know. It summarises all that is needed to give confidence to anyone approaching computers for the first time. The book will be especially useful to anyone new to computers embarking on a research project where computerised data processing is required. Regrettably £18 seems a lot for this small paperback and will probably discourage some from buying it.

NA FLETCHER

Contributions to Contemporary Neurology: A tribute to Joseph Michael Foley. Edited by Robert B Daroff, John P Conomy. (Pp 259; £49.95.) Guildford: Butterworth Scientific, 1988.

American neurologists are well recognised to be generous to their retiring and retired senior colleagues. Recently at the annual

meeting of the American Neurological Association, a spoken tribute was paid to Joe Foley and concurrently Butterworths have published "Contributions to Contemporary Neurology", a tribute to Joseph Michael Foley.

Forty-one authors have contributed to this beautifully produced and reasonably priced collection of essays. As one would expect, the majority of the contributing authors are practising in North America or Canada with the exception of Dr Simoncini and Dr Stuhmer from the Max Planck Institute in the GFR and Michael Swash from the London Hospital. The essays were collected following a meeting held in March 1986 in Cleveland to honour Dr Foley. It was then his seventieth birthday and the papers delivered at that symposium now comprise this volume of dedication.

Reading the account of Foley's neurological life one senses the warm affection felt for this eminent American neurologist, a place of eminence justified and endorsed by his Curriculum Vitae presented as a coda to this collection of essays.

The authors combine to produce twenty essays and I feel it would perhaps be invidious to select particular contributions for a special comment. Areas of considerable interest, exciting areas of research development and standard essays on many aspects of neurological disease comprise the collection. Understandably Richard Johnson writes on acquired immunodeficiency. The advent of PET scanning is recognised. Who better than Betty Banker to write on dermatomyositis and the polymyositis syndromes and Monroe Cole on aspects of rehabilitation? The essays are all short but comprehensive as one would expect from their provenance. I feel the volume deserves to be well read. The standard of the printing is exceptional, the editing accurate and this collection of essays fulfills its purpose in honouring Dr Foley.

JB FOSTER

Myasthenia Gravis. Monographs in Allergy Vol 25. Edited by M H De Baets, H J G H Oosterhuis, K V Toyka. (Pp 160; £57.30.) Basel: Karger, 1988.

This slim volume represents the proceedings of the First European Conference on Myasthenia Gravis held in June 1987. The book contains contributions from several distinguished researchers in myasthenia, the majority concentrating on current immunological work in the disease rather than clin-

ical material. The initial chapters discuss progress in understanding and dissecting the acetylcholine receptor and the specificity of its antigenic binding site; the considerable advances in understanding the molecular structure of this site will be new to many neurologists. These themes are developed in chapters on T suppressor and helper cells; knowledge about the nature of the T cell response seems to be indicating new directions for possible therapeutic intervention. Measures such as autoantibody depletion using adsorption by polyvinyl alcohol resins, non specific immunomodulation using cyclosporin, immunoglobulin G and antibodies against various T cell determinants and antigen specific immunomodulation are discussed briefly in a chapter on possible new strategies by Toyka. The thymic myoid cell is discussed in terms of its age distribution, expression of AChR epitopes and surrounding T cells.

The latter part of the book contains a brief overview of long term treatment of myasthenia by Oosterhuis and there are chapters on an experimental and clinical trial of cyclosporin. In a brief workshop summary at the end new possible trials are alluded to and the importance of clear objective measures of clinical progress indicated. There is a wide ranging review on the pathogenesis of Lambert Eaton syndrome (Newsom-Davis) and a chapter on non-receptor muscle antibodies in myasthenia gravis highlighting among other things the possible association between these and focal myocarditis.

There are few concessions to the non-immunologist in this book but the chapters are well written and the editors have on the whole avoided stringing together a collection of papers which purely present new material without discussion. The book is not intended as a clinical guide to the myasthenias but rather is appropriate for the clinician who wishes an update on the direction which research is taking in this most intriguing of conditions. The text, diagrams and index are all well produced and the price indicates that the book is not for mass production.

CM WILES

arbitrarily, arranged these papers into four sections with somewhat misleading titles. The first deals with degenerative changes according to topography: neocortex, sub-cortical nuclei and hippocampus. Whilst these papers are predominantly morphological, there is an interesting immunocytochemical review by Chan-Palay on somatostatin and neuropeptide Y in the hippocampus of Alzheimer's brains. There are only two papers in the second section, one on the correlation between morphological changes, neurotransmitter loss and the degree of dementia (Mountjoy), the other on the use and value of quantitative morphometry (Meier-Ruge).

The morphological, chemical and immunocytochemical abnormalities of the neuronal cytoskeleton are reviewed very concisely in the third section by Ulrich, Anderton and others. The concluding part of the book contains aetiological and pathogenetic considerations. The evidence for viral aetiology is cogently and comprehensively reviewed by Esiri, while the role of aluminium and silicon is assessed by Edwardson and his group. The last chapter by Probst and co-workers provides important and convincing, but not entirely unexpected, evidence, indicating that the formation of senile plaques in the neocortex may occur independently of the development of paired helical filaments in neocortical neurons.

The length of the contributions considerably varies, but the standard is consistently high. However, the selection of subjects is rather arbitrary and important areas of current progress are not discussed. Recent results of molecular biology and genetics have not been included in the book, and although some of this work may be biochemical, it certainly should have found its way into this book which is part of a series entitled *Interdisciplinary Research in Gerontology*.

For this reason it is difficult to recommend this book for those who want to read a comprehensive review of recent developments in cerebral aging and Alzheimer's disease.

PL LANTOS

attempt a frontal attack on the area. The book is both a review of current studies and opinions on personality disorder and a description of the research conducted by Tyrer and colleagues, using their own Personality Assessment Schedule (PAS). It also gives an account of some previously unpublished studies. Much of the literature reviewed is dominated by North American research on DSM-III categories.

The philosophy behind the book is uncomplicated. In the preface Tyrer writes "Once valid and reliable assessments of personality disorder are established, many other questions can be addressed". Thus early chapters are devoted to the various diagnostic schema and the reliability and validity of the PAS and there is little discussion, apart from the chapter by Professor Gunn, of the conceptual difficulties or criticisms of the trait theorists approach to personality measurement. The question "What is personality?" is never asked, nor is there adequate discussion of the social learning and cognitive perspective.

The book is therefore a useful addition to the literature but fails to make a new contribution or to shed very much light on this difficult area. The problems with measuring and assessing personality and attempting to distinguish it from "illness" may not be a psychometric problem but a conceptual one. It is still reasonable, indeed parsimonious, to argue that the distinction between trait and state is a superficially helpful concept, but one that has been supported by little convincing evidence. Tyrer and colleagues do not think, make a sufficiently good case for the ability of the PAS to measure personality in someone who also meets the criteria for a psychiatric diagnosis.

It is difficult to know who will want to read this book. It provides little help for a clinician and its cost seems to rule out a wide readership. It will be of most interest to someone involved in research into personality disorders and for such a person it brings together much of the current work and describes the results of a research programme which accepts the medical view of personality disorder and works within those concepts.

GLYN LEWIS

Histology and Histopathology of the Aging Brain. *Interdisciplinary Topics in Gerontology* Vol 25. Edited by J Ulrich. (Pp 182; £77.30.) Basel: Karger, 1988.

This book contains review articles on several aspects of normal cerebral aging and Alzheimer's disease. The editor, rather

Personality Disorders: Diagnosis, Management and Course. By Peter Tyrer. (Pp 190; £40.00.) Guildford: Butterworth, 1988.

Personality disorder still attracts controversy and appears to repel research and so it is courageous of Tyrer and colleagues to