
This production is somewhat reminiscent of the Vinken and Bruyn Handbook of Clinical Neurology and aims to provide a "comprehensive and current coverage of both experimental and clinical aspects of neuropsychology". The first volume, which forms the basis for this review, starts with some introductory chapters on history, methodology, cerebral dominance, neuropsychological assessment etc; goes on to deal with attentional disorders, including confusional states, orientation and hemispatial neglect; and concludes with the first ten chapters of the section on aphasia and related disorders. Apart from completing the section on aphasia, subsequent volumes will contain sections on disorders of visual behaviour, amnesia, emotional behaviour, the split brain and hemispherectomy, and issues surrounding ageing and dementia.

Undoubtedly, the whole series is a major undertaking. As far as can be judged from the contents of the first volume, together with the outline in the preface, the coverage across the series as whole is not quite as comprehensive as is claimed. There is a bias to the theoretical and experimental aspects rather than the practical and clinical. Thus the whole of neuropsychological assessment is reduced to two chapters and it appears that there is no systematic discussion of the management of neuropsychological impairments despite the burgeoning literature on this topic. The anatomical approach to neuropsychology based around the impairments associated with lesions in different parts of the brain (eg the effects of frontal lobe damage) is not specifically covered. The editors might claim that much the same material comes up in the sections on amnesia, aphasia etc., but this would not be a wholly convincing response. These quibbles apart, the series does look as if it will cover a very extensive chunk of neuropsychology.

The individual contributions to the first volume are mainly of a standard appropriate to a work that obviously sets out to become a definitive reference. The chapter by Bisach and Vallar on hemineglect stands out particularly as well worth reading. There are some problems however. Aphasia is undoubtedly a major topic that is difficult for any single author or small group of authors to cover authoritatively in all its aspects. Splitting the field into so many different chapters written by a multiplicity of experts may help to enhance the depth of the analysis of each small aspect. The disadvantage is that it makes the overall treatment of the topic appear rather fragmentary. Possibly this will be minimised in practice since many of those consulting the volume will do so to look up particular issues, such as naming or agaphasia, and will not attempt to read the whole in sequence. Inevitably there are also some minor problems or omissions within individual chapters. For example, the chapters on methodology do not give single case experimentation anything like the prominence that might follow from the frequency with which it is encountered in the literature.

Taken as a whole, the first volume suggests that the Handbook of Neuropsychology will turn out to be a very useful series which is likely to be a welcome addition to many libraries. Although stronger on the more theoretical and experimental aspects than material of direct practical application, the latter is by no means totally neglected. The series as a whole certainly seems set to bring together a wealth of material from the rapidly expanding field of neuropsychology in a generally competent and authoritative manner. The first instalment will certainly not languish unconsulted on this reviewer's bookshelves.

E. Miller


The preface to the book states that the topics were chosen from papers delivered at the 4th International Child Neurology Congress and the Satellite Symposium of Child Neurology & Developmental Paediatrics, which was held in Jerusalem in 1986. Authors of papers selected were given an opportunity to update their contributions. There are 34 chapters and 84 authors.

Chapters 1 to 12 cover recent developments in aetiology, diagnostic categorisation and pathogenesis of some nervous system disorders in childhood. The first paper is an introduction to the biochemical and newer techniques of molecular genetics. The Dutch group give a good review of the spectrum of paroxysmal disorders and suggest a comprehensive list of biochemical tests for the screening and diagnosis of these disorders. The discussion on the pathogenesis of virus-induced nervous system injuries including both acute infections and viral persistence in the CNS is fairly comprehensive.

The effects of seizures on the developing brain is brief but adequate and concludes with prognostic features to indicate long-term outcome. Opiate peptides and their relationship to seizures is covered in detail with the conclusion that ACTH, a peptide derived from the same precursor molecule as B-endorphin, is the only demonstrably effective anticonvulsant in certain childhood seizure states.