BOOK REVIEWS

Life in Research. By DEREK RICHTER. (Pp 170; £5.95). Sutton: Stuart Phillips Publica-
tions, 1989.

It has been both pleasure and privilege to review this book; at least I have in common with Dr Derek Richter that we got Membership on the same day, by election, an honour to the R.C.P. He is a founding father of the science of brain chemistry; early work included the discovery of monoamine oxidase. The authors describe his move from pure chemistry for humanitarian reasons and the battle for funds, laboratory space and hospital links as psychiatry was dragged into the twentieth century.

Physicians are at best front-men liaising with scientists; Dr Richter became clinician as well as trail-blazer. Recurring themes are his efforts to set up international links in brain research and to foster both greater public awareness of mental illness and self-help for it. Lesser ventures included hill-farming, half-way homes for rehabilitation and a fruitful role as donor for A.I.D. All this is told with artless care, as if a man always ready to see the best in other men. His real heroes are Wieland of Munich and Gowland Hopkins of Cambridge. The latter at eighty once reached the entrance to his department at the same time as a friend of mine with a fellow under-
graduate. “You first, gentlemen,” said the Nobel Laureate and past-president of the Royal Society, “two come before one”. That was the humility of the great; Derek Richter is a worthy disciple. This is a record of how inspiration, hope and hard work created a new science from nothing; it should fascinate far more than just neurologists and psychiatrists.

SIMON CURRIE

Nerves and the Gastrointestinal Tract

Falk Symposium 50. Edited by M V SINGER AND R GORBELL. (Pp 817; Price: £95.00 (US $105.00). Publisher: Lancaster, MTP Press Ltd. Distributor: Kluwer Academic Pub-
lishers Group, 1989.

This book is a product of the 50th Falk Symposium, a series of excellent conferences on diverse aspects of gastroenterology gen-
erously supported by Dr H. Falk. It will be of little interest to clinical neurologists, and it is noteworthy that no conventional neurologist is a contributor (unless it be the unfortunate person from Marburg listed as K.B.?).

Nevertheless, it stands as an excellent account of the rapidly moving and intriguing area of gastro-intestinal “neurology”, and the pub-
lishers have done well to produce it almost faultlessly in little over a year.

For the uninformed majority, the key points are the several lengthy reviews, and sum-
maries of the various sections, by leaders such as Gershon, Hirschowitz, Szurszewski, Walsh and Wingate which, published alone, would make a valuable, small textbook on the
topic. However, all contributions to the con-
ference have been faithfully included, though
many are little more than abstracts, complet-
ing the up-to-date perspective but mainly as reference points for the cognoscente.

Those who concern it selves within the cran-
ium may feel disquiet at references to the “gastro-intestinal brain”, but that is an understandable shorthand for the self-con-
erged enteric nervous system. It is not only autonomous as well as autonomic, differing chemically and structurally from the rest of the parasympathetic
system but interacting with the rest of the
ANS and the CNS.

The network of eight different neuroen

type is described and beautifully illustrated by W. Stach, while J D Wood of Ohio explains how the neuronal network functions to produce a co-ordinated intestinal motor activity and Srzurszewski describes interactions
between the enteric nervous system and pre-vertebral ganglia. Yvonne Tache disen-
tangles the role of eight neuro-regulatory
peptides, such as thyrotropin-releasing factor and calcitonin, as transmitters in the brain
 influencing autonomic nervous function.

The weakest section is that on “psychovis-
ceral and behavioural aspects of gut func-
tion”, simply because it is still so uncertain why abnormalities of gut function arise des-
pite the circumstantial evidence of altered
tenteric system behaviour.

Alimentary neurology has not set to become
a new sub-speciality, but knowledge of it will
become essential for comprehending gastro-
enterologists, and the insights it offers into the function and purpose of nerves will
certainly impinge on somatic neuro-
physiological thought.

JOHN R BENNETT

Brain Imaging: Applications in Psychia-
try. Edited by NANCY C. ANDREASEN, MD, Ph.D. (Pp 384; £35.00 hardback). Cam-

This edited volume is a highly valuable contribution to the range and applications of
brain imaging techniques in the study of psychiatric disorders. Indeed, the style of the
contributors is that of both a an introductory reference book and also a source of more
detailed information for those requiring
more specialist knowledge.

The book is laid out in 5 chapters, covering
computed tomography, nuclear magnetic
resonance imaging, computerised EEG and
evoked potential mapping, single photon emission computer tomography (SPECT)
and positron emission tomography (PET).
The contributors are recognised experts with wide practical experience in the applica-
tion and limitations of the various techniques. The great value of the format adopted, namely covering all imaging techniques, is that many of the basic principles in one discipline are relevant to another. For in-
stance, an understanding of back projection in computed tomography can assist in under-
standing image reconstruction in positron emission tomography. All chapters contain an account of basic techniques followed by a discussion of the methods in their application and an account of findings in clinical research. Particularly good is the section on meth-
odological problems encountered in PET research where issues such as anatomical
localisation are considered in great depth from many different perspectives. Although this book is highly specialised the overview of the applications of the various techniques make it easily accessible to those wanting an up to date and critical account of brain imaging techniques in psychiatry.

Difficult Diagnoses in Adult Communica-
tion Disorders. Edited by N HELM-
EBERSTABBOOKS AND J L ATEN. (Pp 218; Price

This is a somewhat unusual but interesting
book on communication disorder. It consists of individual case histories which have proved difficult or instructive to analyse and it is based on an American Speech and Hearing
Association Convention that met in 1987. Cases are grouped into several categories, e.g. flucuency disorder, unusual behaviour associated with head injury; possible psy-
chogenic disorder; depressive disorder; dif-
ferent causes of aphasia; genetic problems; diagnostic and management strategies; difficulty in diagnosing dementia in the presence of dysphasia.

All case presentations are quite reasonable and each problem is discussed in considerable
depth, in most cases to an appropriate degree although perhaps more could have been said about localisation.

This is certainly not a book for beginners. It
assumes considerable background knowledge of aphasia tests and would be difficult reading for the majority of UK Neurologists, I fear! It is primarily aimed at speech therapists with a marginal interest in aphasiology and for this small market the monograph would have considerable appeal.

CH HAWKES

Handbook of Neurological Investiga-

This book, another in the excellent “Hand-
book of Investigations in Children” series, is not a volume designed to be read from cover
to cover. It is so stuffed with practical advice and information that the authors have resor-
ted to every possible device in order to compress this diverse subject into a portable
and handy size. Liberal use of acronyms is made and on rare occasions their prose style
becomes so terse as to be almost unintelligi-
ble. However, as a practical aid to this subject it functions quite magnificently.

The material is presented in two halves with the first devoted to a description of the
investigations themselves. The authors indicated that it would be impossible to cover all
known neurological investigations in a “handbook”, but all those areas likely to be required by the non-super-specialist are covered and at a functionally adequate level. Each chapter describes a different series of techniques and is illustrated by useful case
histories, which demonstrate both the correct use of investigations and some of the pitfalls