BOOK REVIEWS

Life in Research. By DEREK RICHTER. (Pp 170; £3.95). Sutton: Stuart Phillips Publications, 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, he 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. These memoirs 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 candour by 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 undergraduate. "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 H GOEBEL. (Pp 817; Price: £95.00 (US \$165.00). Publisher: Lancaster, MTP Press Ltd. Distributor: Kluwer Academic Publishers Group, 1989.

This book is a product of the 50th Falk Symposium, a series of excellent conferences on diverse aspects of gastroenterology generously 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 publishers have done well to produce it almost faultlessly in little over a year.

For the uninvolved majority, the key parts are the several lengthy reviews, and summaries 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 conference have been faithfully included, though many are little more than abstracts, completing the up-to-date perspective but mainly as reference points for the cognoscenti.

Those whose vocation lies within the cranium may feel disquiet at references to the "gastro-intestinal brain", but that is an understandable shorthand for the self-contained enteric nervous system, 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 neuron types is described and beautifully illustrated by W Stach, while J D Wood of Ohio explains how the neuronal network functions to produce co-ordinated intestinal motor activity and Szurszewski describes interactions between the enteric nervous system and pre-vertebral ganglia. Yvonne Tache disentangles 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 "psychovisceral and behavioural aspects of gut function", simply because it is still so uncertain why abnormalities of gut function arise despite the circumstantial evidence of altered enteric system behaviour.

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

JOHN R BENNETT

Brain Imaging: Applications in Psychiatry. Edited by NANCY C. ANDREASEN, MD, Ph.D. (Pp 384; £55.00 hardback). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

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 contribution is such that it serves both as 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). All the contributors are recognised experts with wide practical experience in the application 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 instance, an understanding of back projection in computed tomography is important in understanding 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 methodological 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 overviews 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.

RJ DOLAN

Difficult Diagnoses in Adult Communication Disorders. Edited by N HELMESTABBROOKS AND J L ATEN. (Pp 218; Price: £16.50). Boston: Little, Brown & Co. UK Distributor London, Cole & Whurr Ltd, 1989.

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 is based on an American Speech and Hearing Association Convention that met in 1987. Cases are grouped into several categories, e.g. fluency disorder, unusual behaviour associated with head injury; possible psychogenic disorder; aphasic classification 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 Investigations in Children. By JOHN B P STEPHENSON AND MARY D KING. (Pp 244; Price: paperback £25.00). Butterworth Scientific Ltd, 1989.

This book, another in the excellent "Handbook 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 resorted 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 unintelligible. 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

that may occur. This section should be compulsory reading for every Paediatric Registrar.

The second half of the book adopts a more problem orientated approach. Here there are sections on common clinical problems as they present, and advice on the suitable approach to investigations. The topics here are very well chosen with excellent guidance on eliciting the relevant clinical features before investigations are undertaken. All sections are followed by a small number of highly selected references, which if consulted would serve to open the area to more detailed study.

This sort of publication can only be judged by how well it aids the Paediatrician or the trainee in his day to day management of neurological cases. I introduced this book to my Junior staff in a lunchtime teaching session. The case histories provided a wealth of useful material and already the book has been consulted on more than one occasion in order to aid a decision as to whether a child should be referred on for more specialised investigation in a regional centre. Perhaps most impressively on two occasions recently I have had to retrieve my copy of the book from my Registrar where it had been "borrowed" from the inner recesses of my case. It is therefore already well used.

For its page size it is a thick book, and the small print is taken close to the edge of the page, so that the book has to be fully opened in order to be read with ease. The binding is already starting to fail under the strain. Would a hardback binding add much to the cost?

I am ordering another copy for our Department. Every Paediatric Unit needs one.

RF MASSEY

Rob & Smith's Operative Surgery: Neurosurgery. 4th Edition. General Editors: H DUDLEY, D CARTER AND R C G RUSSELL. Consultant Editors: L SYMON, D G T THOMAS AND K CLARKE. (Pp 516 Illustrated; Price: £150 H/cover) Butterworth Scientific Ltd, 1989.

To review a book on operative surgery is a most difficult task. One can find things to quibble about but in my opinion this volume is absolutely first-rate. It is a great improvement on the earlier editions, mainly due to the wider authorship from both sides of the Atlantic.

It is invidious to pick out any particular chapter as they are all comprehensible and of a high standard. The illustrations are excellent. The chapter that I personally found most interesting was that by Charles Drake who has distilled his considerable experience of aneurysms of the posterior circulation. What an excellent choice of authorship this was: his unique experience will be there for all of us to ponder over in years to come. Charles Drake recommends and defends the subtemporal approach to aneurysms at the bifurcation of the basilar artery but I personally have found petronal approach very satisfactory as long as one mobilises as fully as possible the various branches of the internal carotid artery. Of course the crucial importance of preserving the perforating vessels is stressed.

My only criticism is that there is no chapter on 3rd ventricular tumours. Colloid cysts are not indexed and the only surgical approach to

a pineal tumour is a biopsy. I believe that there are occasions when an open surgical approach to the pineal is warranted (I now exclusively use the supra cerebellar approach), while there are considerable advantages to the transcallosal approach to colloid cysts rather than the transcortical approach. No doubt this omission will be made good in the next edition.

I have long advocated that the neurosurgical trainee should have a notebook into which he writes tips and ideas on neurosurgical approaches that he learns during his training. Although expensive, I recommend that the trainee should save up, buy this book and unashamedly scribble on its pages and use it as his own notebook. It would be money well spent.

CBT ADAMS

A Colour Atlas of The Skull. By B K B BERKOVITZ AND B J MOXHAM. (Pp 112; £25.00.) London: Wolfe Medical, 1989.

In their preface, the authors state that this book has been produced in response to the increasing difficulty in obtaining human skeletal material, and is thus presumably meant to supplement or replace direct contact between skull and medical student. This is obviously a worthy but difficult task, given the fact that the skull is a complex three dimensional object, and in its cleaned and sanitised form almost monochromatic. How well have the authors succeeded in giving the student a working knowledge of this object?

The first section of the book gives standard views of the intact skull, supplemented by smaller labelled line drawings and radiographs of what appears to be the same skull. The small size of the line drawings makes the labels (which are untidy, being neither right nor left justified) difficult to read. The radiographs are in standard clinical orientation, and so differ from the colour illustrations of the skull.

Subsequent sections concentrate on smaller areas and individual bones. These are less successful, since the magnification is held (nearly) constant. This results, for instance, in two pages being devoted to the fairly featureless parietal whilst the seven views necessary to illustrate the ethmoid (35 × 25 × 30 mm in this scale) are concentrated, with labels, onto a single page. The palatine bone suffers in the same way. The book is completed by sections on tooth morphology and eruption (again supplemented by radiographs) and the foetal skull.

The photography throughout is excellent, given the difficult nature of the subject. I found the black backgrounds of the early section better than the varying shades of blue behind individual bones. Many of the prints (eg occusal views of the dentition p 84) have been oddly cropped, leaving large asymmetrical areas of background colour. I found the labelling messy throughout. In some places long legend lines are used (presumably to avoid the superimposition of black lettering on a blue ground) whilst in other places lettering lies on the ground. The terminology is slightly outdated in at least one case.

Oddly the main competition for this book comes from the same publishers in the shape of McMinn's atlas. This contains no radiographs but otherwise covers the same ground. Referring back to McMinn I realised

that the photographs there were larger, all on a black background, and given a much less obtrusive system of labelling. If you can live without the radiographs I would think that money is better spent on McMinn, who covers much more ground for a few more pounds.

DR JOHNSON

The Electromyographer's Handbook 2nd Edition. Edited by RAJESH K SETHI AND LOWERY LEE THOMPSON. (Pp 160 Illustrated; Price: £21.50.) Published by Little, Brown & Co. U.K. Distributors: Edinburgh, Churchill Livingstone, 1989.

This is a cookbook written as an aid to learners of EMG techniques. The book is profusely illustrated with photographs showing stimulation and recording sites for all commonly studied (and some less commonly studied) motor and sensory nerves, together with short descriptions of the techniques that may be used. There are sections on the facial nerve, the F wave, the H-reflex, repetitive stimulation, standard EMG and single fibre EMG with illustrations of results. Tables of normal values have been culled from the literature for both adults and children. A short and pertinent list of references concludes each chapter.

The descriptions of techniques may serve as an aid to those in training but are necessarily of limited length with no in-depth discussion. They are no substitute for practical instruction from a competent electromyographer. Planning a study appropriate to a subject's complaints, evaluating the completeness and technical adequacy of results and interpreting the study are barely covered. The book may have an appeal to learners but they will still need to consult further texts.

M HAYWARD

NOTICES

The Annual General Meeting of the British Neuropsychological Society will be held on Thursday 22 March 1990 at the National Hospital, Queen Square, London WC1. Further details from Dr Narinder Kapur, Wessex Neurological Centre, Southampton General Hospital. Telephone: (0703) 777 222 ext 3576.

The Fifteenth International Symposium on Cerebral Blood Flow and Metabolism, 1-6 June 1991, at the James L Knight International Center, Miami, Florida. Information from: Ms Jenny Bernal, Conference Coordinator, BRAIN-91, University of Miami Conference Center, 400 SE Second Avenue, Fourth Floor, Miami, Florida 33131, United States.

The Eighth International Neuro-Ophthalmology Symposium, Winchester. To be held on 25-29 June 1990. Applications to: Conference Associates, INOS, Congress House, 55 New Cavendish Street, London W1M 7RE, United Kingdom.