The results of a clinical study show that the therapeutic effect of serotonin uptake inhibitors is stronger than expected. These inhibitors have been used for various conditions such as obsessive-compulsive disorder, bulimia, and substance abuse. The study also highlights the role of serotonergic systems in other conditions such as obsessive-compulsive disorder and substance abuse. In the future, these drugs may be used for the treatment of other conditions such as bulimia and substance abuse. This book is a comprehensive guide to the use and development of serotonin uptake inhibitors.
Many areas are excellently covered, comprehensive and up to date. But there are a few aspects to be a lack of balance and far too many inaccuracies to permit any general recommendation to students of neurology.

J M S PEARCE


In a beautifully written foreword Henk Verbiest a Neurosurgeon reminds the reader that it was over forty years ago that he had first emphasized the importance of Developmental Spinal Stenosis in our understanding of many of the common back pain disorders. John Nixon has called upon experts from the disciplines of Orthopaedic Surgery, Neurosurgery, Radiology, Neurophysiology and Spinal Surgery to provide a comprehensive up-to-date and carefully written account of all aspects of lumbar spinal stenosis.

In twenty concise chapters, they develop the concept of spinal stenosis from a consideration of its embryology, anatomy, pathogenesis, definition, symptomatology, diagnosis and natural history, to its medical and surgical treatment, and prognosis. Each chapter is clearly set out in an orderly and logical manner to guide the reader through its contents. The chapter on Pathogenesis by Michael Edgar was particularly informative. The author has reviewed the current theories and presents a flow chart to summarise these.

To the surgeon, the chapters on post-operative spinal stenosis and surgical techniques are most constructive and demonstrate beyond doubt that spinal surgery for whatever back pain condition should no longer be performed by the "occasional" surgeon. The techniques required, and the skill and the ability to deal with the unknown and unexpected, demand the highest level of experience and familiarity from the surgeon be he orthopaedically or neurosurgically trained. This book is strongly recommended for all who deal with back pain and in particular the Surgeon interested in Spinal Surgery.

MARTIN A NELSON


The concept of epilepsy as a disturbance of the balance between excitatory and inhibitory influences in the central nervous system is central to our understanding of the disorder. Increased knowledge of the major neurotransmitter systems is now beginning to have a direct clinical relevance in the field of epilepsy as new drugs with specific neurotransmitter actions are reaching clinical trials and even, in the case of vigabatrin, general availability.

There have been a number of books on the subject of neurotransmitters and epilepsy but these have all been the product of symposia with research rather than up to date reviews of the subject. This excellent multi-author volume is the product of a summer lecture series for neurosurgeons given at Woods Hole, Massachusetts. As such, it has a general relevance that is of great value.

After a rather lengthy exposition on clinical aspects of epilepsy subsequent excellent chapters cover the basic mechanisms of neurotransmitter-receptor interactions and then introduce the concept of second messengers and neuromodulators. After a discussion of animal models for the study of seizures and epilepsy further specific chapters deal with GABA, acetylcholine, catecholamines, glutamate and GABA receptors. There are further good chapters on neurotransmitter receptor studies using PET and the mode of action of antiepileptic drugs.

All the chapters are well written, up to date and well illustrated. Their great attraction is the succinct readable way that basic neuroscience is summarised for the clinician. One has to conclude that the average American neurosurgeon is much more familiar with the basic concepts of neurotransmitter function and pharmacology than is the average clinical neurologist in the United Kingdom! This is a superb volume that requires a place on the shelf in any clinical neurophysiological library for the ongoing education of clinical neurologists particularly anyone professing an interest in epilepsy.

DAVID CHADWICK


This book is one of a series, some dealing with individual infections, others with those affecting one particular organ system. It is edited by Professor Harold Lambert, with contributors from several specialties, including microbiology, infectious diseases and paediatrics: neurologists and neurosurgeons being in the minority. The variety of the infections which can affect the nervous system make this volume one of the broadest in the series. It has much of interest for neurologists, particularly working ones with beds for acute admissions (as opposed to paper ones with a few "cold" beds). The book is strong on historical perspective and cosmopolitan in the way that Third World experience is brought in, such as West African meningitis. It is well referenced, indeed it is comprehensive and authoritative in a way in which the section on infections in most neurological text books cannot be.

The first half of the book deals with meningitis. There is little neurological input, thus the differential diagnosis and the place of lumbar puncture are not discussed in relation to other conditions such as subarachnoid haemorrhage. The sections on treatment are thoughtful though there is no general section on the "blind" treatment of meningitis when no organism is identified. The chapters on pneumococcal and gram negative bacterial meningitis will be of value to neurosurgeons. That on Lyme Disease is authoritative. This is also true of that on herpes simplex encephalitis though paediatricians do not expand on adult rehabilitation and outcome. HIV infection is fully dealt with and illustrated. Spinal infection gets a separate chapter, which as with intracranial infection is described by neurosurgeons.

The omissions are minor. Tropical spastic paraplegia due to HTLV-I infection goes unmentioned. Poliomyelitis receives just a paragraph. Infections involving the peripheral nervous system, such as tetanus, botulism, leprosy and diphtheria, will presumably be in other volumes, if they make it at all. In a factual book, mycotic encephalomyelitis does not get a look in.

In conclusion this volume complements standard neurological and neurosurgical textbooks and is well worth having.

SIMON CURRIE


This is the latest volume in the Advances in Neurology Series, and brings the story of Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis up to date. The chapters on Cell Biology and Cellular Pathology endeavour to address the known characteristics and behaviour of the motor neuron in health and disease. The section on Genetics includes chapters on familial amyotrophic lateral sclerosis as well as the childhood onset spinal muscular atrophy, and considers the molecular genetic aspects. The Epidemiology is again reviewed and there are papers on aluminium-induced Motor Neuron Degeneration and Post-radiation Motor Neuron Syndromes. The section on Immunology embraces the various types of motor neuropathies and monocular Gammopathy, also known as plasma cell dyscrasias. A section is devoted to the consideration of viral infections and the final two papers consider the problems of clinical trials, including the all important aspect of design.

The book has a good mix of the clinical pathological and experimental laboratory detail, but the enigma remains. Researchers and general neurologists will find it a useful addition to the Series.

K J ZILKHA

**SHORT NOTICE**