the side to which babies are held by their mothers influences handedness later in life. As in most discussions of asymmetry, motor control, handedness, and visual hemifield action, the well covered here, reflecting the neuropsychologists' frequent neglect of this aspect of hemispheric function, which is a pity given that this area is one which has shown the greatest advance over the last fifteen years or so. In many instances the discussion is merely extended rather than developed by the latest literature, and even in a few are there any really new ideas such as Geschwind and Galaburda's hypothesis of the dual role of the frontal lobes in the determination of handedness and accompanying side-effects, or the distinction between implicit and explicit memory. Where these preliminary developments are often only tangentially related to hemispheric specialization, as for example in the recent debate on agnosia, or the nature of deep and surface dyslexia, where the question of which side of the brain is involved is only one possible basis of discussion of the problem and may be not the most fundamental.

The author's second intention, to provide a text a bit more lower level than before, is less well fulfilled. Most of the discussion assumes some knowledge of the subject and there is little description or illustration of basic ideas or phenomena. Thus the author refers to Sperry's 'classic' split-brain work but does not describe it before embarking on a close and detailed discussion of callosotomy effects; and Broca's and Wernicke's aphasia are briefly summarised but only so that someone knowing them could follow what was meant. The book is not to be recommended for students below the third year, nor for anyone who does not know the basic pattems, though on our side for more advanced students or workers in the area it is well worth reading—for the next year or two at least, maybe for up to six?

KA FLOWERS


Any book outlining the diagnosis and management of spinal cord compression is most welcome. All too often disorders of the spinal cord have been regarded as an unexciting backwater of Neurology. Teaching is generally poor. The diagnostic prowess of our elders, so often ostentatiously vaunted with respect to the brain, tends to fall short of expectation when the disorder lies within the vertebral column. If medical audit—teaching by retrospective enquiry—is to prove its worth, it should attract a greater awareness of any short-fall in the practical management of neuromuscular disorders including cord compression.

Not surprisingly, Drs Byrne and Waxman's book carries a message. It is somewhat different from the standard line of thought in Europe and in certain respects limited in its scope—but an important message nonetheless. They concentrate throughout on the clinical analysis of pain as the first evidence of spinal compression, pre-dating motor and other symptoms. They begin with some formidable statement that should alert the most complacent of resource managers:

In the USA low back pain is second only to colds as the most common reasons for patients' visits to physicians. The number of individuals affected by back pain grew at a rate of 14 × that of the US population growth between 1971-1981. The book is well written, the presentation and references excellent. European experiences are quoted and earlier work not neglected. But the limitations of the study are immediately apparent. Neither author is a neurosurgeon. They do not set out to discuss traumatic spinal injury, congenital or developmental anomalies, or to review only the principles of therapeutic management. Dr Waxman is Chairman of Neurology at Yale—New Haven and Dr Byrne co-director of the Neuro-Oncology unit. Therein lies their principal interest. Nearly one-third of patients dying with cancer have vertebral metastases, 5% develop epidural spinal cord compression and 90% of this latter group have pain localised to the spine or referred elsewhere as their presenting manifestation. The enshrined message for this group of patients is the need to inquire into any unexplained pain and if those pains cannot be ascribed to any disorder to look to the spine. Where doubt exists magnetic resonance imaging should be performed.

It is tempting to dub this book "cord compression in Miami widows" but this would be to do them and the authors a disservice. Not only do they make a valuable contribution to the subject of epidural metastases, but they have much to contribute to the wider concourse of spinal compression that could be read to advantage by even the most experienced Neurosurgeons. Neoplasia whether epidural, intradural-extradural, intramedullary or leptomeningeal is fully and informatively examined. One can search many books in vain for percentage figures of different types of tumours and this is no exception. Tumours in children receive scant mention. There are comprehensive chapters on anatomy and the pathophysiology of signs and symptoms, covering such details as the innervation of vertebrae, conus and epicrucial syndromes, the occurrence of papilloedema with spinal metastases, and the pyramidal syndrome of which commonly masquerades as sciatia. The chapter on pain is given as the key to diagnosis with the differential diagnosis covered in chapters on non-neoplastic causes of compression and non-compressive myelopathies. The foundation of these chapters seems to be an extensive literature search but I have reservations concerning the adequacy with which such topics as spondylosis, disc disease or Chiari malformations are discussed except in the context of providing a differential diagnosis.

EMR CRITCHLEY


A gap of two years since the last book on the neuropathology of AIDS may seem rather short; yet the rapid progress of our knowledge makes this new publication most appropriate. This is a totally new book which comes from Los Angeles, Drs Vinters and Anders coming from a laboratory which has accumulated a wide experience over the years since this syndrome first appeared.

The book is divided into thirteen chapters which, except for that dealing with the virological aspects by O'Brien, Koyanagi and Chesebro, are all by Vinters and Anders themselves. The descriptive neuropathology is given the lion's share. Chapter 1 is devoted to the appearances of HIV encephalopathy and its clinical counterpart; we see the various features and entities of multinucleated giant cells, the hallmark of the disorder, in their diverse arrangements and distribution. This is followed by the description of the numerous opportunistic infections—viral, fungal, bacterial and parasitic, the tumours and the vascular complications. Other chapters describe the abnormalities of the white matter, in which the controversial topic of vascular myelopathy is given surprisingly little space. The pathology of peripheral nerve and muscle is dealt with in chapter 9, while chapter 10 is devoted to 'miscellaneous findings' which also includes lesions of the pituitary and the eye, while chapter 11 is devoted to paediatric AIDS. Other, non-neuropathological topics are also included though, as expected, they do not contribute greatly to one of these 'is it AIDS and the nervous system'. Put, as it is, at the end of the book, I fear this chapter will perhaps not get the attention it deserves and would have been more appropriate as the opening chapter. Editors often do not know what is important.

As it is organized, the book is not exempt from some minor repetitions: CMV infection is described under 'Opportunistic infections' and then mentioned with 'Leukoencephalopathy' and again in chapter 9 among the abnormalities of the nerve. These repetitions are, in a sense, unavoidable, even in books written by a single (or few) authors and indeed do not detract from the overall attraction. Among these I would mention an enjoyable text, a considerable amount of information, some interesting and stimulating pieces of information (the exhaustive description of lymphomatoid granulomatosis, the still little known subject of the 'focal pontine leukoencephalopathy'), and the extensive bibliography. Plenty of pictures too, although many of them, regretfully not up to the standards of the text.

In conclusion, a book that, while describing the personal experience of a laboratory in the forefront of the investigations on the neuropathology of AIDS it is a great contribution of other groups equally involved in this topic: a book to recommend to people working in the field. Its price is, unfortunately, what one expects these days; however British readers might take some comfort from the current favourable rate of exchange.

F SCARAVILLI


This short book of about 120 pages describes a study initiated by the Biomedical Ethics Unit, Royal London Hospital, the staff of which considered how best to look at difficult ethical decisions. After some discussion, three principal themes emerged—that all decisions about life and death must be kept at the bedside, that any ethical programme should not have the status of a formal hospital standing committee with its normal bureaucratic structure, and that any appearances of multiple, often clannish, cells that make ethical decisions would not be acting on


This is the first volume of a series of research monographs translated from Russian. In this case the original was originally published in 1986 and has been translated by Amy Bostow. This is a stout volume, apparently set from camera-ready typescript. The translator has produced a very readable English version of the text.

BUZNIKOV's central theme is this: there is a group of substances known to the world mainly for their role as neurotransmitters within the vertebrate and invertebrate nervous system. However many members of the club may be found in embryos before the differentiation of cells recognisable as nervous tissue. What, then, is the function of the transmitters in the absence of nerves?

To some extent this argument is semantic. We could rewrite the above thesis like this—Early in development a group of gene products are being transcribed: later on we know that these are concentrated in nervous tissue and are there concerned with transmission of nerve impulses. In that form the question of early function almost answers itself, and we might well expect that the substances concerned are doing in nervous tissue what they do best, and have always done, act as mediators of cell-cell communication.

BUZNIKOV's extensive studies on invertebrates (plus LAUDER's chapter on verterbrates and KATER & UDSON's on neurile outgrowth) are claimed only to have demonstrated that pre-nervous transmitters exist: the main author is more reticent about their universal distribution and their function. However if not universal they are demonstrated to be widespread, and their many functions (variously as intracellular regulators, transmitters of non nervous intercellular interactions, as local hormones or non-synaptic transmitters) have been enumerated and extensively documented.

On the whole a very useful source of references; too expensive to be affordable by individuals but a necessity for any comprehensive library.

DR JOHNSON


A Kings Fund report (1988) on community services for people with physical disabilities stated that "Aids and equipment supply is the single most confused area of service provision for disabled people".

This practical handbook explains in simple terms the statutory framework behind the provision of equipment for the disabled and offers practical advice and guidance on the general criteria to those who deal with the provision of aids and equipment whether they be Health Service or Social Services based.

The information contained in this book is up to date and relevant to any of us who are asked to make an assessment of a disabled person and would be an excellent source of reference in any Occupational Therapy Department, Social Services or Housing Department.

BARBARA MARSDEN

NOTICES

Section of Neurology, Royal Society of Medicine. Symposium on Molecular Genetics, 25-26 February 1991. London. Further details from Mrs N Lewis, Sections Officer, The Royal Society of Medicine, 1 Wimpole Street, London W1M 8AE.

Regulations for Upjohn prize for Neurosurgical Research of the European Association of Neurological Societies. A prize of £3000 is offered by the Upjohn Company and awarded annually by the EANS. Those eligible for the prize should be neurosurgeons under the age of 40 at the time of submission, who are either fully trained or still in the course of their training. Applicants should be either a member of one of the national societies of the EANS or should be supported by such a member. The basis of the manuscripts submitted should be previously unpublished research work, either clinical or experimental or both, of relevance in the field of neurosurgery. There are no specific regulations for the format or type of manuscript. Thirteen copies of the submitted manuscript, together with a brief curriculum vitae should be sent to the chairman of the EANS Research Committee before 1 April 1991. The prize will be normally presented during the EANS training course of 1991 and the winner will be invited to attend that meeting and to present their work. The Chairman of the EANS Research Committee is: Professor J D Pickard, Wessex Neurological Centre, Southampton General Hospital, Southamp ton SO9 4XY, United Kingdom.

The fourth Meeting of the Neurosonology Research Group of the World Federation of Neurology, 6-8 June 1991, Hiroshima, Japan. Details from The Secretariat, c/o International Conference Organisers, Walsh Japan Company, 1F Royal Building, 12-8 Nibancho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 102 Japan. Fax: 03 5275 6994.

Focus on Epilepsy Symposium: cellular mechanisms and pharmacological approaches, 10-12 August 1991, Adéle, Quebec, Canada. Details from Focus on Epilepsy Symposium Secretariat, 3801 University Street, Room 804, Montreal, Quebec H3A 2B4, Canada. Fax: 514 398 8540.