and, if the advice given in this volume is followed, then excessive investigation would become rare.

The volume is divided into two sections: the first dealing with the fundamental principles and applications of the various tests used in neurology, and the second half is devoted to diagnostic approaches to common neurological problems. Certainly the strength of this book is in its first section, where the individual tests most commonly used (neurophysiology, neuroradiology and biopsies) are covered in detail, either by the editors or by specialists in the individual field. The accounts are clearly written and not only discuss the role of the investigation but clearly set out the limitations of the individual techniques and the complications thereof. Within this section, the chapter on the Approach to Hereditary Metabolic Disease is outstanding, with a very lucid explanation of modern molecular biology and genetics. There are some areas which reflect the difference in European and North American practice, where for example, it is recommended that the individual performing the lumbar puncture should perform the cell count personally within three hours!

The second half of the book deals with Diagnostic Approaches to Common Neurological Problems. The editors acknowledge that their approach will meet with a variable consensus from other Neurologists but rightly stress that "...the laboratory evaluation for each patient should be thoughtfully individualised".

For its intended readership, and that is the junior neurological Resident, this is an excellent introduction to the basic tests used in neurological practice and as such should have a place in each Departmental library.

WJK CUMMING


Kakulas and Mastaglia assembled a formidable array of neuroscientists and others from around the Pacific basin to consider the implications of "the new genetics" for the management of the X-linked recessive myopathies at a workshop in Perth, WA, which took place in February, 1989. The proceedings of this workshop constitute the first comprehensive overview of the clinical consequences of the Xp 21 deletion and, as such, is a welcome addition to the literature. However the editors and their contributors were working in what is one of the most rapidly evolving scenes in human biology and it is inevitable that volumes of this kind are "out of time" by the time they reach the bookstands. This is borne out by contemporary developments in the study of dystrophin, the gene product of the Xp 21 deletion(s).

Deficiency of dystrophin may not live up to its early reputation as a precise diagnostic tool because of its rather variable expression, even in boys with Duchenne disease. Nevertheless, this workshop is a first-class reference source and "bench book" for clinicians dealing with what Rowland now calls the Xp 21 myopathies. It is organised in three major sections; the molecular genetics of the Xp 21 myopathies, their relationship to the pathogenesis and pathology of the Duchenne disease and their implications for its treatment. In each of these three sections, the participants are at the forefront of the investigation and management of the genetically-determined myopathies and this is reflected in the quality of the individual contributions.

There follows two sections summarising the round table discussions which followed the major sessions and their conclusions. These are rather less valuable scientifically and clinically but their honesty reflects the uncertainties in the area. Certainly Donald Wood's assertion that "We have an awful lot yet to learn about defects in the region Xp 21..." is incontestable.

PHUDGSON


The text purports to be both accessible and scholarly providing an indispensable source of information for a range of disciplines dealing with the brain damaged due to closed head injury. An introduction to the definitions of basic terms, with a classification of Head Injury and a critique of the Glasgow Coma Scale is followed by an exhaustive account of the epidemiology of head trauma, ultimately and helpfully summarised.

The description of the pathophysiology of head trauma is basic and presumably directed to those unlikely to be familiar with the fundamentals of neuroscience. A discussion of retrograde and post traumatic amnesia embraces mechanisms derived from psychological models of memory, after which an intracerebral injury is made into the equation, particularly in the literature concerning memory loss and its assessment. Again, a summary aids the reader. Disturbances of cognition and language are dealt with in a similar exhaustive manner.

The contentious issues surrounding the post-concussional syndrome are handled sensitively and undogmatically; and the burdens placed on families by the unwelcome personality changes are thoughtfully discussed. As the problems of determining outcome and recovery and the lack of evaluative research into assessing techniques of rehabilitation conclude the text, which contains an extensive bibliography. The book is not an easy read and the neuropsychological strengths are greater than the psychiatric. The aims are fulfilled with perhaps a bias to a psychological rather than neurological readership. As a reference work, this sturdy paperback is well priced.

D NEARY


It is often a perception of British Physicians that our colleagues in the North American continent tend to rely on investigation to achieve a diagnosis. The authors of this text stress heavily the need for detailed clinical evaluation of the patient before investigation...