judgement. The difficulty is of weighting the available evidence. Not surprisingly this book favours SPECT but I do not feel that they have established this as firmly as is needed.

RCD GREENHALL


This impressive reference book has been produced by the Epilepsy Foundation of America, the two authors have been assisted by a distinguished basics statistics and advisory committee. The result is an outstanding compendium of facts and figures; all you could wish to know about epilepsy and indeed, a good deal more. The compact, factual nature of the contents does result in a somewhat styleless prose though this is not necessarily a disadvantage in a book that will be referred to, rather than read through. Each chapter is supplemented by a helpful annotated, up to date bibliography and stimulating section on further research. The opening section of the book deals with the incidence and prevalence of epilepsy and individual values and easily understood tables. The next section on seizure risk factors commences with a brief explanation (of great value to the statistically less literate) of terms such as relative risk and odds ratio. This informative chapter then considers the likelihood of epilepsy following certain mechanical or metabolic insults to the brain.

Further sections include review of the current knowledge of the role of genetics in epilepsy, the outcome following the use of anti-epileptic medication for prophylaxis in high risk groups, the effect of pregnancy and the risk of teratogenesis, the prognosis of epilepsy and a particularly authoritative account of the evidence and reasons for increased mortality among individuals when compared with the general population. Throughout this text there is a high standard of scholarship. It is comprehensively indexed and closes with an invaluable glossary defining terminology.

This book is highly recommended, serving its stated purpose to expand and improve our current knowledge of epilepsy. It provides a comprehensive, critical review of current statistical information on all aspects of this disorder. It will prove invaluable to anyone who deals regularly with seizures and will act as a constant and definitive source of reference for both clinical and research purposes.

IAN BONE


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 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.

WJR 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 gene product 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 many 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.

PHUDSON


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 index is made into the medical 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


This concise manual is a conference report
on febrile convulsions and on the management of status epilepticus both give eminently practical advice and I was particularly pleased to see that in the drug section, low doses are strongly favoured in intensive care units, clonazepam, received no mention. It is extraordinary that rectal diazepam is not officially approved in the USA. Among other excellent chapters there is a detailed diagnostic approach that is particular informative.

Not unexpectedly, the definition of epilepsy remains elusive, even "ongoing" fits following an acute cerebral event, requiring anticonvulsant treatment, being regarded as non-epileptic. The title of "comprehensive" presents a challenge and a few gaps can be detected. The role of alcohol in causation of seizures in adult life is barely discussed and impossible to find in the index. Fits on withdrawal from benzodiazepines are not mentioned and multiple sclerosis does not appear except as a cause of non-epileptic paroxysmal symptoms. Perhaps a more important lapse is the absence of a clear account of a systematic approach to the common problem of adult onset epilepsy.

This book has a genuine need and can be highly recommended.

WB MATTHEWS


This book addresses an important issue for neuropsychology—how useful are clinical and laboratory tests for practical assessment in predicting patients' performance in everyday life and their likely residual difficulties or scope for rehabilitation?

In the past clinical neuropsychology has concerned itself with trying to isolate particular effects of damage to particular areas of the central nervous system, but it has proved inadequate as a basis for judging present or future patient disability in real-life situations.

There are two main reasons for this. Firstly, most injuries are diffuse, so that their effects cannot be simply listed as a combination of separate localised deficits. There are systematic changes associated with unlocalised brain injury but these are quantitative rather than qualitative and/or involve changes in the operation of the whole system rather than in separate individual components of behaviour. Secondly, their effect on everyday tasks is often indirect, so that the practical impact of any loss may be much more or less than one might think from laboratory measures of ability.

Thus, whether a slowed reaction time is likely to make patients dangerous when driving depends to what extent they need to make fast reactions—good driving usually involves anticipating that fast reactions are not required. Operating a control system with many parallel continuous inputs, however, would be drastically affected by slow reactions. These are extreme examples (e.g. that whitebrowns have properties different from and independent of those of their parts) re-emerge as a major principle.

Other examples of such unpredictable knock-on effects of particular symptoms are given in this book, which attempts to develop neuropsychology as a practical science of functional assessment that can measure real-life performance and predict capabilities for rehabilitation. The first section comprises chapters concerned with the ecological validity of existing tests and methods of assessment, most contributors concluding that few of the present measures can accurately predict patient performance in real-life situations.

There are useful reviews of the correlation with practical everyday performance of battery scores (Mary Acker), aphasia and communication deficits (Leila Harley), memory tests (Alan Sunderland) and demographic data (Laetitia Thompson and Robert Heaton). In all these cases the problems of using measures of impairment of component psychological processes such as aphasia scores, memory loss, or IQ deficit to predict the efficacy of general behaviour are emphasised, and more general functional assessments proposed to give better predictions. Two other chapters discuss the wider issues of quality of life assessment (John MacKenzie) and legal implications of the whole (Paul Wang) from a neurological standpoint.

The second section deals with assessing overall competencies in neurological patients, the presence of an organic lesion taken as simply one factor causing difficulty. Chapters by Schachter et al on the impact of amnesic difficulties on capacity to work, by Mayer et al and by Warzack and Kilburn on analysing decision and action errors in everyday activities, and by Hopewell and Van Zomeren on measuring car driving competence open up new areas of assessment that are plainly of great practical importance.

In these chapters the nature of the lesion has become irrelevant and the patients' performance is approached holistically by task or systems analysis. In this sense brain damage is just another form of stress to which the system has to adapt, and efficiency is measured in terms of activities of daily living such as the ability to return to work or cook a meal adequately.

Analysis of exactly what is wrong, based on objective tests, is still the aim, and experimental psychology the best method of achieving it. Among many interesting ideas included in this book are an argument for the need for behavioural measures rather than questionnaires, that computerised tests are going to be increasingly useful for testing, that we need multi-task batteries rather than isolated single tests of memory, language etc., and that perceptual-motor or performance tasks are often the most sensitive for detecting deficits and predicting practical impairment.

Generally, there seems to be a consensus, expressed in several chapters that neuropsychology has come into its own as a supporting science for neuroscience and neurosurgery. Any neuropsychologist interested in such possibilities will find this book a good indication of what the future holds.

KA FLOWERS


This short volume is based on a series of lectures that the author gives to the medical