

ease. There are useful sections on the differential diagnosis, management and investigation of transient amnesia and an extensive chapter on neuropsychological testing during and after TGA which would be helpful to psychologists, interested clinicians and research workers.

There can be few clinicians who have such extensive personal experience of TGA as Dr Hodges. I enjoyed this book, which must now be the definitive work on the subject, and I would recommend it to anyone seeking information on this interesting disorder.

TJ WALLS

The Molecular Pathology of Alcoholism Molecular Medicine Series. Edited by T NORMAN PALMER. (Pp 293; Price £22.50.) 1991. Oxford, Oxford University Press. ISBN 0 19 261903 9.

The refined pleasures and social nuances of the discriminating enjoyment of fine wines or carefully produced malt whiskies contrast badly with the scene of organs and minds ravaged by alcohol excess which daily populate our wards. Simplistic behavioural theories have long been insufficient to explain the progress (descent?) to alcohol abuse, and the differential susceptibility of individuals to damage by similar amounts of alcohol remains a puzzle. The explanation must be genetic and biochemical and this timely book seeks to explore the current state of knowledge.

Overall, it succeeds in its aim. Unfortunately the first chapter (more than one fifth of the book) is unhelpful and redundant, seeking but failing to give a concise account of the clinical manifestations of alcoholism. Things improve hereafter, with Charles Lieber, the doyen of liver alcohol researchers, neatly reviewing the substantial corpus of knowledge about alcoholic disease of the liver up to 1990. Alcohol and aldehyde dehydrogenases, so central to current thinking about reasons for, as well as mechanisms of, alcohol abuse, are efficiently described in a breathlessly up to date chapter from the Karolinska and Pittsburgh. This leads to a description of the molecular genetics of the enzymes, and a more general discussion of genetic factors in alcoholism. A somewhat exotic account of alcoholism in Orientals and South American Indians highlights some possible genetic aspects in these races, particularly the possibility that an inherited low ALDH₂ level may lead to a greater flushing response to alcohol and thus aversion. However, the genetic discussion is entirely about the likelihood of becoming an alcoholic and does not deal with the equally important topic of individual variation of susceptibility to specific organ damage.

The CNS chapter is authoritatively written by John Littleton of King's College describing clearly the hydrophobic effects of alcohol on lipid molecules, the changes in Cl⁻ flux through GABA_A receptors and inhibition of Ca⁺⁺ channels and the way these may lead to the well known central nervous effects of alcohol. Nothing is said about mechanisms of peripheral nerve damage.

This is a good account of a rapidly moving field. Anyone who wants to be up to date should read it.

JOHN R BENNETT

Advances and Technical Standards in Neurosurgery. Vol 18. Editor in Chief: L SYMON. (Pp 209; Price DM 168.00) 1991. Wien, Springer-Verlag. ISBN 3-211-82243-7.

Volume 18 of this add-on series consists of five chapters. The first of two in "Advances" discusses the future of robotics in neurosurgery from the Grenoble Group, and is, frankly, disappointing. Too much detail is given of stereotactic theory, and the many precautions taken when the authors robotic system is in use. Little space is given to discussing the future. The second chapter in "Advances" discusses the medical management of subarachnoid haemorrhage. It is useful, clear and concise, and also has an excellent reference section.

The final three chapters deal with technical standards in neurosurgery. Professor Yasargil describes his unilateral partial hemilaminectomy approach to the removal of spinal tumours, but does not show a clear advantage over the suspension laminoplasty. The second chapter discusses the primary transportation of head injuries in Germany, and is a fascinating account of how a wealthy country deals with this difficult problem. Helicopter ambulances are expected to arrive at the road side within five to twenty-five minutes of the injury, and operate over fifty kilometres. The final chapter describes the current status of implanted drug delivery systems and their applications, with particular reference to Baclofen and Morphine. The author has wide experience of the two current market leaders. No mention is given of costs which limit the use in the NHS of the expensive, but excellent Infusaid system. Otherwise this is a very useful chapter.

MICHAEL POWELL

Cluster Headache Syndrome. Major Problems in Neurology Vol. 23. By OTTAR SJAASTAD. (Pp 429; Price £45.00.) 1991. London, WB Saunders Co. Ltd. ISBN 0 7020 1554 7.

This is a very unusual book and represents one man's interest in a difficult and intriguing problem. It is nearly 400 pages long and contains over 900 references. The book is divided into four chapters. In the first, the classification and diagnosis of the cluster headache syndrome is discussed. The second chapter is devoted to episodic cluster headache, the third to chronic cluster headache and the fourth to chronic paroxysmal hemicrania. This last chapter is long, 100 pages, and includes everything that is known or postulated about chronic paroxysmal hemicrania. This is a very unusual condition the author having only nine patients in his series with a total of 84 cases reported throughout the world some of which are not fully documented. The diagnosis of pain syndromes presents great difficulty and in the absence of major physical signs the diagnosis must rest mainly on the history. Professor Sjaastad has used various methods for assessing symptoms and signs including techniques such as dynamic tonometry, corneal temperature recordings and pupillometry. He describes these tests in detail. In the case of chronic paroxysmal hemicrania extensive studies have been done on the patients available, but due to the rarity of the syndrome most of the observations have been done on

only a few cases in some instances on only two or three patients.

In the section on treatment of cluster headaches he gives a good account of all the treatments available which is summed up in table 2-18 and he emphasises the need for prophylactic treatment as well as for attack therapy. He points out that if the attack is short lasting, i.e. 20-25 minutes the therapeutic treatment can only be administered after approximately 5 minutes and if it does not take effect for 10-20 minutes little can be achieved by giving the remedy. One interesting feature of chronic paroxysmal hemicrania is that the response to Indomethacin is one of the diagnostic features.

This is a useful book for headache specialists who are interested in the cluster headache syndromes but the information given is so detailed that unless the reader knows something of the field some of the writer's arguments may be difficult to follow. It does however give all the information at present available on this complicated syndrome.

MARCIA WILKINSON

SHORT NOTICES

Neuropsychology of Aggression. Foundations of Neuropsychology Series. Edited by J S MILNER. Series Editor B P Uzzell. (Pp 193; Price Dfl205.00, US\$90.00, UK£62.25.) 1991. Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Publishers. ISBN-0-79231-245-7.

Deafferentation Pain Syndromes: Pathophysiology and Treatment (Advances in Pain Research and Therapy, Vol 19). Edited by B S NASHOLD, JR AND J OVELMEN-LEVITT. (Pp 351; Price \$122.50.) 1991. New York, Raven Press. ISBN 0-88167-823-6.

Culturing Nerve Cells. Edited by G BANKER AND K GOSLIN. (Pp 453; Price £44.95.) 1991. London, The MIT Press. ISBN 0-262-02320-2.

Disorders of Peripheral Nerves. Edition 2 Contemporary Neurology Series. By H H SCHAUMBURG, A R BERGER AND P K THOMAS. (Pp 348; Price £54.00.) 1991. Philadelphia, F A Davis Co. UK Distrib: London, Williams & Wilkins Ltd. ISBN 0 8036 7734 0.

The second edition of this established authoritative work includes three new chapters: Diagnosis and Assessment, Rare and Poorly Validated Neuropathies, and Rehabilitation in Peripheral Neuropathies. AIDS and Lyme disease are other additions in this updated text which is the definitive work of manageable size.