

**Writing successfully in science.** By MAEVE O'CONNOR (Pp 299; Price £8.95). 1991. London, Chapman & Hall. ISBN 0 04 445806 1

A large part of this book is already familiar, in its older form of *Writing Scientific Papers in English* (1975).

The advice given is directed towards the writing of a thesis or a substantial piece of scientific writing, and will be of much help to the recent graduate with ambitions to produce good writing of this type. Additional material covers preparing oral presentations, making poster demonstrations, and writing review articles, *curricula vitae*, theses and book reviews.

There is a detailed reference section covering the fields of nomenclature, typography, style and abbreviations. This will be of great help to the single handed author in finding solutions to the many problems encountered in writing for the scientific community; and to those working in teams in finding a buttress for a disputed point of usage. Many readers will be already capable of writing to a high standard. They will not be disappointed.

The section covering posters and presentations is particularly welcome, as these form a significant part of scientific communication, and there is little advice on their construction from other sources. There are first class instructions for the preparation of slides and overhead projected transparencies.

This book is its own advertisement in that it is written in irreproachable English without ambiguity, contentiousness, error or condescension. It is highly recommended.

B FOWLER

**The Role of Serotonin in Psychiatric Disorders.** (Clinical and Experimental Psychiatry Monograph No. 4). Edited by SERENA-LYNN BROWN and HERMAN M VAN PRAAG. 1991. (Pp 349; Price \$54.50). New York, Brunner/Mazel Inc. UK Distrib: New York, Raven Press. ISBN 0 87630 589 3

I took up this book with high hopes that it would clarify my ideas about serotonin and mental illness. I was to be deeply disappointed. Many of the chapters have multiple authorship and it shows. Many of them turn out to be little more than lists of papers on the subject in question with no attempt being made to rate the papers from a scientific or methodological point of view. This makes the style extremely turgid and makes it impossible to sort out the wheat from the chaff.

Having struggled through it, one can agree that there are many reports of abnormalities of serotonergic functioning in a wide variety of psychiatric disorders. Not uncommonly, the abnormal functioning may be in opposite directions in different papers. So far, there is no "Grand Unified Theory" which can weld all these reports together into a coherent whole.

The book covers a vast literature up to 1989 and could have been useful on that score alone. Unfortunately, it is let down by a very poor index. For example, MHPG (3-methoxy-4-hydroxyphenethylene glycol) in the index gives only one page reference (p 174). In the text it is substantially mentioned on pages 249, 251, 292 and 304. There is a similar problem with the cortico-

trophin releasing factor where two pages with substantial references to it (pages 61 and 62) do not occur in the index.

Much as it grieves me to give the thumbs down to something which has involved a vast amount of work, I cannot recommend this book.

CM TONKS

**Pyogenic Neurosurgical Infections.** By HR INGHAM, PR SISSON, AD MENDELOW, RM KALBAG AND VL MCALLISTER. (Pp 218; Price £65.00). 1991. Sevenoaks, Edward Arnold. ISBN 0 340 51900 2

In these days of high technology it is salutary to remember that neurosurgeons can be brought low and their patients devastated by humble but ubiquitous bacteria. This relatively short monograph of 218 pages addresses the many problems of pyogenic infections within both the intracranial and spinal cavities. Essentially the chapters are stand-alone contributions though good editing has led to continuity and the avoidance of unnecessary repetition. The opening historical chapter sets the scene for review type contributions based more on the pre-existing literature than on the experience from the Newcastle-upon-Tyne Unit where the contributors practise. The authors have used the opportunity to review other associated topics such as antibiotic prophylaxis for operations and intracranial and intraspinal abscess. One might have expected more detail regarding tuberculous infection but this would appear to be the only omission.

The overall standard of the text is high and the debatable areas of contemporary neurosurgical practice, particularly those relating to treatment, are well researched and fairly reasoned; but the quality of radiographic examples is mixed, ranging from adequate to poor. The aims of the monograph are clear though the proposed readership is not. I would recommend it to neurosurgeons and their senior trainees, though more junior trainees would require some basic knowledge before getting the maximal advantage. It will also be valuable for neuroradiologists and microbiologists, and even neurologists might read it for their edification. For its size it is perhaps a little overpriced but I would recommend it for the neuroscientific departmental library, and also for the postgraduate library of general hospitals.

RV JEFFREYS

**New Antiepileptic Drugs.** Supplement to *Epilepsy Research*, 3. Edited by F PISANI, E PERUCCA, G AVANZINI AND A RICHENS. (Pp 196; Price US\$128.00/Dfl 250.00). 1991. Amsterdam, Elsevier or in USA/Canada from New York, Elsevier Science Publishing Co. Inc. ISBN 0 444 81392 6

Four editors have organised 70 authors to contribute 27 chapters on general experimental and clinical aspects of new antiepileptic drugs (AED's). Only one new major anticonvulsant has been introduced during more than 20 years. In the last twelve months 2 new AED's have been marketed in the UK and this book lists twelve more undergoing trials. This therapeutic bonanza reflects the strides made in the last decade in our understanding of the epileptic process at the cellular level.

No longer do AED's emerge by serendipity; rather, promising candidates are screened for their effect on known excitatory or inhibitory systems. This book seeks to summarize existing knowledge of this growth area. There is little new material reported, most chapters are short reviews by eminent workers in the field; they are well referenced. Topics discussed include the influence of AED's on the natural history of epilepsy, animal models, the brain distribution of AED's and chapters on their pharmacokinetics, efficacy and safety. Thirteen chapters are devoted to new AED's individually. Finally, 4 clinical trials are reported. The editors have done well to reduce repetition to a minimum given the number of contributors. The book is nicely produced and easy to read. I found it a helpful overview of the epilepsy scene as it was at the end of 1990.

PAUL MILLAC

**Thomas Willis 1621-1675: His Life and Work.** (Series: Eponymists in Medicine). By J TREVOR HUGHES. (Pp 151; Price: £12.95 (H/b) £7.95 (P/b). 1992. London, Royal Society of Medicine Services Ltd. ISBN 1 85315 162 9 (H/b) 1 853150 161 0 (P/b).

This scholarly monograph surveys the life and scientific contributions of one of the most celebrated of doctors. Neurologists will be particularly interested in his seven major books starting with *Diatribae Duae Medico-Philosophicae* (1658) and ending with *A Plain and Easie Method of Preserving Those That are Well From the Plague* published posthumously in 1691. The best known is undoubtedly *De Anima Brutorum Quae Hominis Vitalis ac Sensitiva Est* (1672) which provides original observations in comparative anatomy, including dissections of the silkworm, lobster and oyster, and a series of remarkable speculations on sleep, the brain as the seat of the mind and soul; it also expounds his descriptions of myasthenia gravis and of paracsis.

Hughes describes Willis's seminal studies on Neuroanatomy and neurophysiology, and the "Circle of Willis", probably illustrated by Christopher Wren. Though clearly described by Vesling in Padua in 1647 and by Wepfer, Fallopius and by Harvey's teacher Casserius, none of these early accounts described the full circle and the anastomosis between the anterior and posterior circulations. Willis made signal contributions to the autonomic nervous system, the spinal cord's circulation, the cranial nerves, and discussed and speculated freely on coma, wakefulness, convulsions, sensation and pain.

In the space of 119 pages supplemented by a detailed bibliography and notes, Trevor Hughes has provided us with a beautifully illustrated account of this extraordinarily prophetic physician. His book is a scholarly exposition based on extensive studies in the Ashmolean museum, the Bodleian library, and in other important archives. He generously acknowledges the many other biographical accounts of Willis. Much of this book is devoted to his life and family, to the Oxford intelligentsia, and to the various intrigues of political warring under Charles I and Charles II.

Neurologists will be grateful for this fascinating little book and for its stylish presentation by the RSM.

JMS PEARCE