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 that has involved a vast amount of work, I cannot recommend this book.

CM TONKS


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 a pleasing absence 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.

RJ JEPPEYS


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 approved by the FDA 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 gives an overview of the 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 the natural history of epilepsy, animal models, the brain distribution of AED's and chapters on their pharmacokinetics, efficacy and safety. Thirty-three 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


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 Medicinophysicatae (1658) and ending with A Plain and Easy Method of Preserving Those That Are Well From the Plagues Published in Latin in 1691. The best known is undoubtedly De Animæ Brutorum Qualis Hominis Vitalis ac Sensitiva Est (1672) which provides original observations in comparative anatomy, including descriptions 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 description of the circle of Willis.

Hughes describes Willis's seminal studies on Neuroanatomy and neurophysiology, and the "Circle of Willis", probably illustrated by Christopher Wren. Though clearly described by Vesalius in Paris in 1547 and by Wepfer, Fallopius and by Harvey's teacher Caserius, 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 extraordinary and 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