A marvellous collection of concise, recondite essays in classical Neurology, it explores the present and seeks future evolution in understanding. It epitomises Ben Johnson's remark in the Alchemist: "If his dream last he'll turn the age to gold."

JMS PEARCE

ABC of Spinal Cord Injury (2nd Edition). BY DAVID GRUNDY AND ANDREW SWAIN (Pp 61; Price £8.95) 1993. London, BMJ Book News.

The authors, Consultants in spinal injuries in Salisbury, and accident and emergency in Weston-super-Mare have updated the first edition of these BMJ papers in a splendidly illustrated format. These important injuries afflict 10 to 15 per million each year in the UK; and, 51% result from road accidents, 27% from domestic or industrial injuries, and 16% from sport. Mortality in those who get to hospital is 5% and for the survivors the death rate is doubled for incomplete paraplegia and tetraplegia, but increased threefold for complete paraplegia and seven-fold for complete tetraplegia.

The papers deal in practical fashion with attention at the roadside, transfer to hospital, radiology, and early management in the receiving unit and in the spinal injuries centre. Succeeding sections review medical, surgical, urological and nursing treatments and the details of rehabilitation and later the adaptation, social issues and complications after return home. These latter sections are written with social worker, occupational- and physio-therapists who add much to the solution of practical daily problems.

Neurologist may balk at the odd howler "... when the lesion is above the sacral segments—that is, when there is an upper motor neurone lesion" and perhaps at the persistent use of the obsolete MRC scales for motor power (developed for the 1947 polio epidemic), but overall the many issues are so clearly explicated that the articles or paperback deserve a wide readership. If the contents are heeded, the harrowing lot of these courageous patients should be improved.

JMS PEARCE

Parkinson's Disease. From Clinical Aspects to Molecular Basis. Series: Key Topics in Brain Research. EDITED BY T. NAGATSU, H. NARABAYASHI, AND M. YOSHIDA (Pp 220; Price DM 98,—) 1991. Wien, Springer-Verlag. ISBN 3 211 82272 0

This volume reports the results of several research projects on Parkinson's disease which have in common a support grant from a Ministry of Education, Science and Culture of Japan between 1987 and 1989. The aim of the project was interdisciplinary research extending through molecular biology to clinical neurology. In fact, the net result is a series of 20 projects which only loosely interrelate. The studies in molecular biology stand rather distinctly apart from those in clinical medicine and, even within the separate domains, the extent of integration is not great. Despite these reservations,

the book contains some very interesting studies. In fact, some of the findings, such as the 2.15 times greater relative risk of Parkinson's disease in individuals with particular cytochrome P450 genotype may not get the wide readership and recognition that would be the case if it were published in a refereed journal. The studies in molecular biology, form an interesting series of research papers although the clinical studies are rather selective. Although of interest in themselves, they do not clearly fulfil the wide remit of the publishers as "clinical topics which are essential for clinical neurologists to diagnose or treat patients with Parkinson's disease".

The book resembles more the proceedings of a symposium than a comprehensive text. Thus, it will gain a greater place as a reference source in a library than as a book for repeated personal use.

HJ SAGAR

Alzheimer's Disease—New Treatment Strategies (Dementia Reviews Series/1). Edited by ZAVEN S KHACHATURIAN AND JOHN P BLASS. (Pp 235 Illustrated; Price: \$99.75 (U.S. & Canada) \$114.50 (All Others). 1992. New York: Marcel Dekker Inc. ISBN 0-8247-8620-3

This book derives from a conference held at the National Institute of Health in 1991. It is the first in a planned series reviewing topics of new knowledge in Alzheimer's Disease. The editors state their main aim is to present convenient summaries of topics that have not yet joined the mainstream of research. It is not therefore concerned with clinical material and many of the chapters are concerned with presenting the authors' "pure" research.

The book is divided into five sections, the first and unfortunately the shortest section deals briefly with current approaches to the treatment of Alzheimer's Disease. The second and third sections look at some new approaches to the development of drugs, particularly agents acting on neurotransmitter systems and the potential uses of neurotrophic factors. Section four examines the interesting theory that there is an anti-inflammatory component to Alzheimer's disease which may be treated effectively by aspirin! The final section of the book houses a variety of potential approaches to treatment. The possible prevention of Alzheimer's disease is discussed in a chapter dealing with the cell biological mechanisms underlying the processing of the amyloid precursor protein.

As with many multi-author reviews readability is variable. There are rather too many chapters presenting a plethora of research with an inadequate discussion of findings. Some of the more accessible chapters such as those discussing the current state of clinical trials and the last chapter on the possible role of Acetyl-L-Carnitine seem all too short by comparison. In general the book is well produced and the figures of good quality.

Because of the rather prohibitive price it is more likely to be a library purchase. This book is not an easy read and probably has

little in it to interest the clinician, but I would recommend it as one to be dipped into for anyone with an interest in Alzheimer's disease and the future of research in this field.

DEIRDRE BONNER

Laboratory Reference for Clinical Neurophysiology. BY J A LIVESON AND D M MA. (Pp 513; Price £50.00). 1992. USA, F A Davis, Distrib. in UK by Williams & Wilkins Ltd. ISBN 0-8036-5641-3

The last two to three decades have seen a veritable explosion in the number and variety of techniques employed in the study of the peripheral and central nervous systems. The aim of the authors of this book has been to "provide a source of data for any and all procedures that could possibly be needed" in the neurophysiological investigation of patients.

The book is divided into three sections, the first covering conduction studies, the second evoked potentials and the third a miscellany of subjects. These are preceded by a brief description of some of the important pathophysiological concepts and the clinical value of the various neurophysiological techniques, as well as characteristics of evoked responses and the associated biological and technological variables that influence their recording.

A standard format is employed for each of the described procedures: this consists of a concise description of the structure to be examined, the stimulation and recording arrangements aided by excellent illustrations, normal values gleaned from the literature and helpful technical comments.

The section on nerve conduction presents data on latency, conduction velocity and response amplitude and encompasses the cranial nerves, cervical plexus, brachial plexus, lumbosacral plexus and virtually all the accessible peripheral nerves emanating from them. Late responses are also covered. In the section on evoked potentials techniques, data on somatosensory, trigeminal, pudendal, dermatomal, auditory and visual sensory pathways are presented.

In the third and final section a hotch-potch of other special techniques are treated. It would perhaps have been appropriate here to place together those chapters concerned with central and peripheral nervous systems respectively. The authors are happier dealing with aspects of nerve conduction than the specialised EMG techniques, as the sections on single fibre and Macro EMG contain a number of inaccuracies, particularly in respect of the illustrations of the needle electrodes. In the final chapters there is a useful guide to the myotomes and a valuable source of data for a variety of techniques performed on premature babies and children, and lastly a most comprehensive reference list is provided.

The authors of this book are to be congratulated for collecting all of this data in one volume and for presenting it in such a clear and concise manner for the clinical neurophysiological fraternity.

PETER FAWCETT