This text, the Scottish psychiatric bible, is now in its fifth edition, since it was first published in 1973. The production of a new edition every five years or so attests to its popularity.

It espouses a comprehensiveness which is not a disease for other post-graduate textbooks. There are chapters on social sciences and on psychology in relation to psychiatry. Functional neuroanatomy, neuropharmacology, and neurochemistry are covered. Once we reach psychiatry itself the coverage is again comprehensive with chapters on child psychiatry, adolescent psychiatry, mental retardation, old age psychiatry and forensic psychiatry. The various treatment approaches are also all given their own chapters. The book contains forty-two chapters written by forty contributors and could bear the title “All you need to know about…..”

It is up to date, and makes use of ICD 10 and DSM 11IR classifications. It has been well received, for it is written in a readable and repetitive little style effectively covering the wide covers and the number of contributors. Despite its length, it is easy to handle, legible and for the most part, easy to read. Any student who has taught the Compendium and can regurgitate most of its information will sail through the membership examination of the Royal College of Psychiatrists.

Its flaw, to my mind, stems from the attempt to be so comprehensive. Some of the chapters and parts of chapters on the sciences basic to psychiatry are very condensed and one gets the feel of a hectic whistletop tour of a topic which might detract from a broad understanding. Of the “it’s Tuesday, it must be Brussels” syndrome. On the other hand it also contains some outstanding sections.

The chapter on old age psychiatry conveyed the author’s enthusiasm and an understanding of the skills needed for that discipline, over and above those deployed by general adult psychiatrists. Dependency on alcohol and drugs and child psychiatry are also discussed with impressive clarity.

I enjoyed reading this book but, I felt that the search for comprehensiveness detracted a little from its overall value. Having everything between two covers is however very attractive to examination takers and I have no doubt that it will continue, quite rightly, to be a popular text with a sixth edition needed before the millennium arrives.

CM TONKS

Sleep and breathing. 2nd Edition Revised and Expanded (Lung Biology in Health and Disease Series/71). Edited by NA SAUNDERS and CE SULLIVAN (Pp 959 Illustrated; Price: $195.00/£128.00 Hbk. 1993 New York, Marcel Dekker Inc. ISBN 0 8247 8877 X

Henri Gastaut recognised the sleep apnoea syndrome in a laboratory in Marseilles in 1966. Since then there has been an increasing interest in sleep, breathing and oxygenation in a wide variety of illness and obstructive apnoea has been recognised as amongst the commonest of disorders in adult males. Highly effective treatment has been developed over the last 10 years by the editors of this book.

The impact of one major symptom of sleep apnoea—daytime sleepiness—after many years of neglect is being taken seriously.

This book is divided into three main sections; on the biology of sleeping and breathing, on sleep apnoea, and on other respiratory problems during sleep. The overall coverage is authoritative with a physiological bias. The language is one of mechanics, pressures, reflexes, chemo-receptors, neuronal pools and haemo-dynamic sequelae. The factual presentation is broad, ranging from the high prevalence of sleep apnoea amongst Polynesians and South Pacific islanders, to the necessity for continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) titration following the usual consumption of alcohol—otherwise, the pressure required will be under-estimated. There is an excellent and critical review of the pharmacological treatment of sleep apnoea. However central nervous control of nasal CPAP and the extension of nasal ventilation to many of the respiratory problems of neuromuscular disease and scoliosis.

Relationships between apnoea, snoring, systemic hypertension, dementia, sudden cut death and atherosclerosis are highlighted—can the mechanical stimulus of snoring be enough to dislodge an arterial wall and be responsible for a stroke? The obvious question as to whether treatment for sleep apnoea can ameliorate dementia or slow its progression remains unanswered but the involvement of the frontal lobe in apnoea mechanisms is reviewed in depth.

How valuable is this book to neurologists and psychiatrists? Many of the chapters, particularly that of the combined physiotherapist-physician team of Piper and Sullivan, on respiratory problems in neuromuscular disease, concern mainstream topics including dementia, stroke, atherosclerosis and hypertension. Neuromuscular and respiratory problems in the Guillain-Barré syndrome are somewhat sketchy. There is little practical guide to some of the difficult issues of the use of CPAP techniques in neuropsychiatric illness, for example in patients with sleep apnoea who also have schizophrenia, hearing difficulty or behavioural problems.

The book is well produced, well edited and has excellent illustrations with not too many lists of sleep variables. The chapter standard is uniformly high but a somewhat curious feature is a 70 page index to every reference in the book listing page numbers of even 7th authors. There is some occasional topic overlap but this is probably unavoidable in a multi-authored work as big as this. The book is essential reading for all members of a modern respiratory unit. I hope the authors are already working on the third edition.

DAVID PARKES


Someone arriving on earth from Mars and seeing the explosion of publications on Alzheimer’s disease could be forgiven for thinking that this represented a linear exponential increase in published papers. Whilst staggering advances have been made in the molecular mechanisms of Alzheimer’s disease (the editor of this book has played a large part in this) other aspects of Alzheimer’s disease have not attracted the same attention. This book addresses some of these areas and is devoted to the management of the disorder, although only one of the five sections is exclusively concerned with this.

The usual subjects are dealt with by the usual skilled authors but it is refreshing to see some new names writing about established subjects. The influence of the pharmaceutical industry is clearly reflected by the interesting contributions on drug trials and clinical research and some original data on Velvacrine creeps into the penultimate chapter. Nuggets include the comment from Harry Cayton, Director of the Alzheimer’s Disease Society and the political context of Alzheimer’s disease by Bruce Delaney. There are also many hands with an overview by Gordon Wilcock. All in all, the jigsaw is pieced together under five sections—the scale of the problem, assessment and diagnosis, nutrition, implications of Alzheimer’s disease and current research and prospects for new treatment strategies. Wrightison Biomedical Publishing have done their usual excellent job. This text contributes significantly to the swelling ranks of books on the subject.

ALISTAIR BURNS