material and the text are easier for the reader who is already familiar with the various approaches. Nevertheless the enthusiastic registrar, perhaps with the aid of a conventional anatomy text, should be able to follow the various different approaches. I suppose that the cost of coloured illustration of the quality of those in Kempe's *Operative Surgery* is now prohibitive, but Rhoton's technique of using enhanced anatomical prosections might usefully have been employed for at least some of the illustrations. The book is a useful addition to the library of the established or aspirant skull base surgeon and it should certainly be available in the departmental libraries of all those units who undertake training in the different aspects of this subspecialty.

DAVID HARDY

Current Therapy in Neurologic Disease. Fifth Edition. Edited by JOHNSON and GRIFFIN. (Pp 429.) Published by Mosby, St Louis. 1996. ISBN 0-8151-4873-9.

The very fact that this is the fifth edition of this book bears testament to its popularity and an approach that is both practical and informative. There must be no neurologist who has not been teased by colleagues in respiratory medicine or cardiology etc at some stage during their professional career about the hopeless therapeutic ambitions of their speciality. This tome provides an effective rebut to their taunts and underlines the huge advances in the therapy of neurological disease even in the past decade. Look for example at the changes management of migraine, multiple sclerosis, motor neuron disease and stroke; perhaps it would be worth asking your fellow specialists to reflect whether the same advances have been made in common medical conditions within their remit. There are no less than 127 contributing authors, of which the vast majority are professors or associate professors (which somehow seems to devalue their titles somewhat) and who provide in the main an erudite and concise summary of the management of the common as well as some of the more unusual neurological conditions but with a rather American slant which is not always applicable across the pond.

The literary style is brief and to the point giving only short descriptive accounts of epidemiology and pathophysiology of specific conditions. However, in a fashion true to the title it concentrates on practical issues of patient management which takes in seminal trials and research in a manner that provides appropriate clinical guidance, and algorithms where necessary, without being dogmatic or exceeding the bounds of present knowledge. In a world where many texts are over referenced because of ease of access in information technology it is also refreshing to see short and relevant bibliographies which provide an additional source of information and the framework of evidence around which the authors have based their interpretations of management.

I greatly enjoyed reviewing this book and if a recommendation were required to practising clinicians I consulted its pages not infrequently in the environment of a general neurology ward with, I am sure, not insubstantial benefit to the patients. There is no doubt that this book provides an effective reference manual for those of us wanting to escape the label of pure diagnosticians and to approach the idea of practical intervention with more confidence.

NEIL ROBERTSON

Handbook of Muscle Disease. Edited by RUSSELL J M LANE. (Pp 792; $195.00.) Published by Marcel Dekker Inc, New York. 1996. ISBN 0–8247–9494-X.

The *Handbook of Muscle Disease* is a compact single volume, multiauthor text. Preliminary chapters cover clinical assessment and investigation of neuromuscular disorders, including the expanding role of myoimaging. In the main body of the book separate chapters encompass the clinical features, pathological changes, molecular genetics, and management of each of a whole range of diseases. Penultimate chapters tackle certain specialised aspects of clinical care including management of respiratory failure and the conduct of anaesthesia and the final chapter describes the role and application of genetic counselling. The general chapters are relevant and informative but it is particularly advantageous to have all major aspects of each disease or category of disease combined in an individual chapter. Concise, up to date summaries obviate an irritating requirement of other books to extract and collate information from several different chapters, and enhance the value of this volume as a practical handbook.

I approached yet another book on muscle disease with considerable scepticism doubting that it could possibly offer any more than the several comprehensive works already published. In his preface Russell Lane maintains that the aim of this book is to complement the standard texts and I was pleasantly surprised to discover this is a succinct, stimulating book that does indeed go beyond many standard texts. Older texts often provide only compartmentalised descriptions of clinical and pathological features. This book not only details molecular genetic developments but discusses them in relation to pathophysiology and pathogenesis of disease. I am impressed that in addition to classic clinical and pathological features the atypical and unusual aspects of muscle disorders are highlighted. Whereas it is impossible with the inevitable production time lag for a book on muscle disease to be completely abreast of the molecular genetic discoveries in this fast moving field, the problem is acknowledged and addenda at the end of several chapters impart the very latest developments at the time of going to press. The book is well referenced. Good texts are frequently let down by poor indexing but to date I have found the index to be very satisfactory.

Some of the black and white photographs of histopathological changes are too small or lacking in contrast to be really informative but this book does not pretend to be an atlas of pathology. There is, however, a well illustrated chapter defining the role of electron microscopy and anticipating future development of ultrastructural immunocytochemistry. The increasing diagnostic benefit of myoimaging is also clearly depicted.

I believe that this handbook provides a valuable text with practical application. It does not shirk from acknowledging that many questions concerning pathogenesis and potential therapy remain to be answered and is thereby a stimulating, challenging text. I strongly recommend this book to clinicians and pathologists and all those working in the field of neuromuscular disease.

JANICE ANDERSON

Posterior Circulation Disease. Clinical Findings, Diagnosis and Management. Edited by LOUIS R CAPLAN. (Pp 711; £95·00.) Published by Blackwell Science, Oxford. 1996. ISBN 0 86542 298 2.

By any standards this is a special book. Professor Caplan's stated aim that it should "serve as a comprehensive review of prior knowledge and writings on the subject" of posterior circulation disease is amply achieved within the 18 chapters, all of which are well illustrated with a combination of line drawings, clinical slides, and high quality radiographic images. The fact that he has been the author of many of the seminal papers on this subject over the past 20 years brings an instant feeling of familiarity to many parts of the book, yet this is really the first time that a truly comprehensive account of the subject has been achieved in a single volume.

To begin with Professor Caplan reviews the historical background, anatomy, pathophysiology, clinical signs and symptoms, diagnostic methods, and treatment options relevant to posterior circulation disease in general. There then follows a detailed review of the above topics as they relate to ischaemia in the territories of each of the various component arteries of the posterior circulation. The value of the single author test is probably most evident here, where the potential for duplication is huge, yet any that does occur serves only to emphasise important points. Finally, there are chapters covering migraine, venous thrombosis, parenchymatous haemorrhage and subarachnoid haemorrhage.

To fully appreciate the value of this book, as well as Professor Caplan's contribution to our understanding of cerebrovascular disease, the preface should be considered essential reading since therein lies the explanation why this is so much more than just a simple distillation of the factual knowledge acquired over a lifetime of clinical practice. Professor Caplan allies the techniques of acute clinical observation and detailed clinicopathological correlation of his teachers (Denny-Brown, Geschwind, Adams, and C M Fisher) to the investigational techniques of the modern era (particularly MRA and TCD) to produce a cohesive account of this relatively neglected area of clinical practice.

There will always remain a place for this type of work alongside the clinical trials, overviews and meta-analyses. This book should be in every hospital library and I suspect it will find its way on to the personal bookshelves of many clinical neurologists.

JOHN BAMFORD