Book reviews

Neurological assessment during the first year of life. Claudine Amiel-Tison and Albert Grenier. Pp 197: £30.00 hardback. Oxford University Press, 1986.

This attractive well illustrated and clearly set out volume is in fact an extensive exposition of neuromotor capabilities in spontaneous and elicited movements and postural reactions. Such narrow emphasis is all very well if it succeeds in teaching reliably at a primary care level how to segregate those neonates or older infants who have clinically important minor neurological dysfunction from those who perform up to the expected level. There are several paths to this goal but, to the present, the French school's missionary success has been impaired by subtle elitism . . . 'muscle tone . . . remains the specialty of the French.'

The first part of the book is a recapitulation of the pioneering work of the Clinique Bandelogue, a very welcome introduction for the beginner. It now brings us to the phenomenon of 'liberated motor activity' by which automatisms are suppressed, the impotence of the neck is excluded, and head control is achieved. The baby enters a state beyond those of Prechtl, almost mesmerised, but is able to perform definitive motor acts like an older infant—for example, in prehension. It may be the most important part of early performance.

The central part of the work sees that 'cold' traditional examinations do not solicit the personal participation of the infant, and the complementary neuromotor examination is enlisted to do so. The process of debugging (sic) is explained, and the repertoire of the liberated state is clearly set out in words and pictures so that much of the techniques could be learned from the printed page. Brazelton and the Bobaths are in one's mind, if not much in the bibliography, but few can have given such emphasis to the reaction of lateral abduction of the hip.

Finally, the book addresses itself very well to the question of attributing degrees of importance to the various deviant items, above all to identifying those of relatively little importance compared with those of prognostic gravity, drawn from the author's own experience. Pitfalls of technique and interpretation may be unthinkable, but there is much of practical value to be learned herein.

NEIL O'DOHERTY

Neurosonography of the Pre-Term Neonate. Edited by Edward G Grant. Pp 116: £46.00 hardback. Springer-Verlag, 1986.

It is a pity that this excellent monograph starts with an inaccuracy on page 1. It was Cooke (*Lancet* 1979) not Ben-Ora (1980), who first reported the use of sector scanning through the anterior fontanelle of the newborn. This is a comprehensive review of the tremendous amount of new information that has accrued since cot-side ultrasound scanning was introduced into intensive care nurseries in the early 1980s. A result of this development is that in North America sub-specialisation has come about, hence the 'neurosonographer'. In the United Kingdom scanning of newborns' heads has been carried out largely by clinicians responsible for their overall care. Nevertheless, the authors are right to emphasise as often as they do the need for discussion between all who have any diagnostic or therapeutic role in the care of these patients.

A very good section on normal anatomy and an introduction into scanning is well worth reading, and not only by the novice. A considerable number of neuropathological and pathophysiological points are emphasised, particularly where these are unique to the preterm brain. Excellent sections on germinal matrix related haemorrhage and periventricular leucomalacia is followed by a rather parochial report of a small series of patients followed up in the authors' institution. Similarly, it is unfortunate that like so many North American monographs reference is made to only a few reports of work carried out in Europe.

This short text does not set out to be comprehensive, and the ultrasound scan appearance of the brain of babies with congenital abnormality and the rarities are understandably not covered. The science of neurosonography is still too new for there to be a great deal of experience in these areas. The highlight of this book, the best section, relates to the disorder that is of most importance and one with which all neonatal paediatricians should be familiar—namely, periventricular leucomalacia. This and all other chapters are liberally illustrated with excellent reproductions of very good photographs. A very practical approach to scanning and an interesting discussion about problems still to be resolved rounds off each chapter of this

book which I strongly recommend everyone who has any role in scanning the newborn brain, whether as operators as interpreters of the reports of others.

ANDREW WILKINS

Frontiers of Gastrointestinal Research. Series Editor P Rozen. Volume 13 **Pediatric Gastroenterology. Aspects of Immunology and Infections.** Edited D Branski, G Dinari, P Rozen, J Walker-Smith, S Karger. Pp 416: £131.00 hardback. Karger, 1986.

This volume contains 30 chapters by distinguished contributors and aims to cover recent work on infections and immunology applicable to paediatric gastroenterology. A comprehensive section on food allergy covers the usual aspects of mucosal antigen handling and various other immunological aspects of these disorders. Most of the information has been reviewed previously, and despite claims of a better basic understanding of the mechanisms, these improvements have had little favourable influence on the management of food allergy and intolerance in the clinics, particularly of our paediatric colleagues who continue to regard 'food allergy' as a rare and rather dubious disorder which other people see.

The section on host defence dysfunction is marred by a chapter on malnutrition and the immune response which contains no references later than 1977—rather the frontiers of gastrointestinal research. Sections on the liver and gastrointestinal infections contain several excellent chapters, particularly on chronic active hepatitis, and a number in the infection section.

Although the book contains much of interest to the paediatrician, for £131.80 it would be reasonable to expect that such a distinguished group of contributors would provide original in depth reviews of the special areas of interest, which would include recent references, some of which would come from sources not easily accessible to the reader. This volume goes only some way to fulfil these aims, and paediatricians, particularly those with a special interest in gastroenterology, would be advised to borrow the book from the medical library for which it was presumably intended. At this price, purchase of the volume cannot be recommended.

J M LITTLEWOOD