

cerebral exercise. One of those whose cerebrum has been most exercised in this way over the last 20 years is the author of this book which completes a quadrumvirate of monographs that have contributed to my own education on the subject over the years,<sup>1-3</sup> the foundation of my interest having been Dr Lennox-Buchthal's little gem which must surely stand as a medical classic.

Dr Wallace has produced a detailed, thoughtful, scholarly, comprehensive, and up to date review of the subject. Of the 412 references, 160 are to publications in the present decade (14 are pre-1900 and 10 pre-1750!). Some indication of the extent of the author's own contribution to the subject is given by the fact that some 25 of the references are to her own publications. It is doubtful, though, whether 'unpublished data' and 'presented to the Annual Meeting of the . . . Association' should have found their way into the list of references.

The main message of the book is that 'the child who presents with a febrile seizure is providing an acute indication that all may not be well with his/her nervous system'. Evidence is presented that febrile convulsions are commonly associated with neurological abnormality. As regards major neurological problems, this association largely results from the all embracing definition of febrile seizures as 'any seizure of cerebral origin which occurs in association with any feverish illness'. Such a definition, while perfectly logical, leads, if unqualified, to ridiculous assertions such as that the death rate from febrile seizures has been as high as 11%. This statistic derives from a study of children who convulsed before dying of infection in the preantibiotic era and is obviously irrelevant to the subject of febrile convulsions as understood today. I do not myself subscribe to the doom and gloom school on this subject and I have yet to be convinced that a child who is apparently well after a febrile convulsion is likely to benefit from a surfeit of medical concern.

This is an important book presenting the personal view of an expert on the subject whose own contribution demands that her view be considered seriously and respected, even though one may not agree with it in every detail.

#### References

- 1 Millichap JG. *Febrile convulsions*. New York: Macmillan, 1968.
- 2 Lennox-Buchthal MA. *Febrile convulsions*. A

reappraisal. *Electroencephalogr Clin Neurophysiol* 1973; supplement 32.

- 3 Nelson KB, Ellenberg JH. *Febrile seizures*. New York: Raven, 1981.

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**The Neuropathology of Temporal Lobe Epilepsy.** By C J Bruton. Pp 158: £20 hardback. Maudsley Monographs No 31. Oxford University Press, 1988. ISBN 0-19-712155-1.

This is a description of clinical and pathological findings in 249 patients who underwent anterior temporal lobectomy at the hands of one surgeon over a 25 year period. The criteria for surgical intervention were frequent fits, inadequately controlled by drugs; focal, unilateral temporal lobe spike discharges on electroencephalography; no radiological evidence of tumour and IQ greater than 70. Most specimens of temporal lobes were examined in a systematic fashion and cases classified on the basis of histopathological findings within the resected lobe. The diagnostic criteria of each group are clearly described; clinical correlations and outcome are discussed within each diagnostic group. The volume is completed by a short conclusion which compares the benefits of surgery between groups, the bibliography, and appendices tabulating clinical details of all patients.

The format of the book is attractive and the style makes it easy to read. The quality of illustrations is good but I would have liked to see more photomicrographs to illustrate the range of abnormalities in the 'alien tissue' and 'indefinite' groups, not difficult to arrange as there are five blank half pages in the appropriate chapter. I found the term 'alien tissue lesion' inappropriate. The lesions described under this heading are ones which most pathologists would term hamartomata; they comprised glia, neurones, and blood vessels, all structures which one would expect to find in the cerebral cortex. Clinical details were brief and I think that most paediatricians would want to know more about outcome than frequency of fits and merely a comparison with preoperative state under the heading 'personality and social adjustment'.

Although the onset of symptoms in two thirds of cases was during infancy or childhood, the subjects of this book are a small carefully selected group of patients,

quite unrepresentative of children in whom a diagnosis of epilepsy is made. For this reason I cannot recommend this book for purchase by individual paediatricians, despite its modest price. I even hesitate to recommend it for the bookshelf of the paediatric neurologist but would, rather, draw it to his attention and suggest that he persuades his neurology or neuropathology department to buy it so that he may consult it from time to time.

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**A Textbook of Epilepsy.** Edited by J Laidlaw, A Richens, and J Oxley. Pp 644: £60 hardback. Churchill Livingstone, 1988.

In view of the fact that if you claim an interest at all in epilepsy you will undoubtedly already have ready access to one of the first two editions of *A Textbook of Epilepsy*, you may ask why you, or your library, should spend £60 on the new one. The answer is that it has been very extensively rewritten and updated. When the book first appeared in 1976 there were 31 contributors. For the second edition in 1982 there were 37 and now there are 38. Twenty two of the contributors to the second edition have now bowed out and there are 15 new names. Only seven of the contributors to the first edition have survived to the third. In bringing out a new edition every six years and making sweeping changes in the authors, the editors obviously intend to keep the textbook alive and on its toes. Dr Oxley has joined the original editors with the intention of 'supervising further editions well into the 21st century'.

The chapter on childhood epilepsy, which in the second edition had three authors, has now been written entirely by Sheila Wallace. Her chapter is a scholarly discourse strong on description of seizure types and on neurobiology and pathology and pathophysiology and perhaps less strong on a clinical approach to the problems of children with epilepsy and their non-medicinal management. As might be expected, the chapter contains a comprehensive account of febrile convulsions, though the simplistic definition of a febrile convulsion as 'any seizure occurring in association with any febrile illness' seems to me unworkable without further qualification. The chapter ends with a list of over 250

references, many to publications as late as 1985.

New to this edition is a chapter on the genetics of epilepsy which provides useful information, though the inclusion of an account of what every schoolboy (or girl) knows about Mendelian inheritance seems inappropriate. Also new is a section on epilepsy and mental handicap by John Corbett.

Other chapters deal with the problems of classification, epidemiology, investigations, medical and surgical treatment, neuropsychiatry, social aspects, and epilepsy in developing countries.

*A Textbook of Epilepsy* is by far the most comprehensive and up to date account of epilepsy currently available. Every doctor who regularly cares for people with epilepsy should have it available for easy and frequent reference.

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aetiological arguments. There is a very useful and extensive list of 1057 references.

Unfortunately the style is rather ponderous and the occasional reader will find himself confused by the breadth of some of the sections. Part of the problem resides in the poor quality of certain passages, which may relate to the translation from the author's Dutch, but which lack a crispness necessary in such a difficult text.

There is little critical review of the suggested format for examination or testing, or of the literature base which is used to support and expand the text. This didactic approach to so many aspects of neurology does little to encourage me to explore neurobehavioural concepts further, although as a reference text, for exploration of unfamiliar neurological territory, I have found it useful. Much more a library book than one to have on one's bookcase at home.

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**Pediatric Behavioural Neurology. Volume 1: Clinical Principles.** By C Njiokiktjien. Pp 395: 130 Dutch guilders hardback. Suyi Publicaties, 1988. (Distributed by Nedbook Int, PO Box 3113, 1003 AC Amsterdam, The Netherlands.) ISBN 90-72008-02-2.

Traditionally, paediatric neurology and developmental medicine have concentrated on motor and sensory function with principles developed from adult function and dysfunction. Recent moves towards the interpretation of paediatric problems in terms of neural organisation and behavioural concepts are the subject of this single author text. Psychiatric and psychological concepts sit alongside neuroanatomy and physiology in a text aimed at a wide readership: paediatric therapists, psychologists, and neurologists. Most aspects of paediatric neurology are covered, and to some extent reinterpreted, in varying amounts of detail. A proposed and lengthy neuropsychological examination is outlined, followed by an appraisal of aetiological considerations. The final bulk of the book comprises consideration of various neurobehavioural disorders. The author is less successful with conventional neurology than with his interpretation of higher cerebral functions, such as memory and learning, and I remain unconvinced by some of his

**Pediatric Neurosurgery. Theoretical Principles and Art of Surgical Techniques.** By AJ Raimondi. With contributions by BA Ishak and ZL Noah. Pp 526: DM 780 hardback. Springer-Verlag, 1987. ISBN 3-540-96408-8.

Is it just nostalgia that makes us think that ours is not an age of great medical personalities? Articles are written in a deadpan style designed to give them that extra coating of veracity, books are sterilised by selecting as many authors as possible and even conferences are likely to attract such numbers that anonymity is the rule rather than the exception. But here is a single author text that exemplifies quite a different, and apparently most unfashionable, approach. Anthony Raimondi, paediatric neurosurgeon for many years in Chicago (although the curious will search in vain for details of his provenance among the title pages of this volume), has written a magnificently personal book that could well be subtitled 'How I perform paediatric neurosurgery'.

It starts with close to 200 pages devoted to the basic technical details of the subjects before spending another 100 pages on tumours alone. These might be tedious even for a beginner were it not for the

quality of the illustrations and the startling operative photographs that illuminate the text on almost every page.

If the personality of the author is so exposed in a book then our reaction to what is written will be determined by our personal responses to what the words reveal. Here there is no doubt that one feels in the company of a friend and as with all friendships there are some things to admire and others with which one fervently disagrees. Yet the friendship between author and reader is preserved by recognising that quality of heart whose strengths can survive the most passionate of arguments. And with this volume there is no doubt that (at least to this reviewer's way of thinking, Raimondi's heart is in the right place.

Raimondi demonstrates a brisk disregard for fashion. He suggests, for example, that there are some craniopharyngiomas that cannot be entirely removed (and in whom it would be folly to try). As for untethering the spinal cord, he argues that in some of the dysraphic states the scarring that follows surgery may well produce as much tethering as there was before the operation—a view with which his Chicago colleagues are unlikely to concur.

But is it necessary to have such a book? Do we even need paediatric neurosurgeons? The answer from a country where such a creature as a whole time paediatric surgeon is non-existent (or rather, extinct) would seem to be no, but that is merely to accept our status as a third world nation when advances in health care are being discussed. For the infant (nowadays often premature), the toddler, and the young child all neurosurgical procedures deserve the attention of a specialist, while for children of any age there are some conditions, particularly those related to abnormalities of development, that are seen so rarely in adult practice that they should surely be dealt with by those for whom exclusivity of practice has allowed a wide experience to be gained. At the very least, paediatric neurosurgical cases should be looked after in a paediatric environment, a situation that still does not exist for some units within these islands.

Of course, there should be paediatric neurosurgeons and for them all I recommend this book. For the beginner, the friendly presentation of technical detail will puff away the mystique that always hovers around the neurosurgical world and allow experience to be gained in safety. For those who are already experienced, there is plenty here with which to agree and with