

Book reviews

Mania—An Evolving Concept. Edited by Robert H Belmaker, HM van Praag. (Pp 393; £18.95.) Lancaster: MTP Press Ltd. 1981.

The aim of this book, according to the forthright statement with which it opens, is "to be a 23-chapter comprehensive textbook on manic illness". How well does it achieve these avowed objectives? There is no problem with the first: 23 chapters are indeed listed in the table of contents, and duly appear in sequence within the book itself. There is, however, much less certainty about it being comprehensive. For example, it provides only the most sketchy advice concerning treatment, scant mention is made of recent observations on the changes in neuroendocrine activity which occur during the course of a manic illness, and there is little on the range of rating scales available for assessing the severity of a manic illness in a given patient before and after treatment.

Despite these shortcomings this book has a number of very good sections. The two reviews on the genetics of mania by Fischer, and by Gershon and Rieder are excellent; the chapter on biochemical theories by Post are thoughtful and thought-provoking, as is that on the possible role of cholinergic mechanisms in the pathogenesis of mania by Janowsky and Davis. The extremely long chapter by Robbins and Sahakian on animal models is exhaustive, everything that needed to be said on this topic is said. I also enjoyed Carpenter and Stephen's chapter on diagnosis, finding their warning against overdiagnosing mania at the expense of schizophrenia a timely one; the pendulum of diagnostic fashion has possibly swung too far in that direction. In addition to these more weighty topics there is an evocative anthology of self-descriptions by patients of what it is like to be manic; a chapter on the relationship of creativity to cyclothymia, and a final chapter devoted to describing the strange career of a seventeenth-century manic-depressive rabbinical scholar.

In summary, I consider this book to be excellent in parts, but wanting in others; it can be recommended as a most useful source book in the fields of genetics, biochemistry and animal models of mania.

TREVOR SILVERSTONE

Essentials of Neurosurgery. Robert R Smith. (Pp 321; £17.95.) London: Harper and Row. 1980.

As the Preface informs us, this book is written primarily for medical students in response to their repeated requests for a textbook of recent vintage, dealing with the fundamentals of the surgery of the nervous system. Not so long ago such a venture for undergraduates would have been frowned upon, neurosurgery being considered an inappropriate study for impressionable students. Even neurology, if it were taught at all, seldom had a specialist instructor to explain its mysteries. Now that the general physician and the general surgeon have all but departed from the teaching scene, their place taken by individual organ specialists, there seems no longer any reason why the interests of the nervous system should not be promoted by its own practitioners. The author of this work is Professor of Neurosurgery at the University of Mississippi.

The volume provides a balanced and comprehensive review of the present-day work and concerns of the neurosurgical specialist, albeit with some transatlantic bias. Introductory contributions deal with the importance of history taking and the basic techniques of neurological examination, and outline the various specialist examinations. The care of the critically ill neurosurgical patient is considered in detail. Thereafter each chapter covers the usual subjects—trauma, infection, cerebral haemorrhage and ischaemic disorder, cerebral tumour, cord compression, disc degeneration and intractable pain. The problems of the paediatric patient and the technique of examination of the newly born receive special attention. Each chapter begins with a review of relevant anatomy and physiology, and proceeds from symptoms and signs to diagnosis and possibilities of treatment. Differential diagnosis is given extended treatment, equal emphasis being given to medical and surgical alternatives. The possibilities and limitations of surgical measures are explained and considerable effort made to present a balanced view. Details of surgical procedures are largely passed over, or, to use the author's term, de-emphasized. The only chapter to contain some surgical detail is that on head injury, and the facts are those that should not be unfamiliar to anyone having care of the head injured. The Glasgow coma scale is explained and recommended for assessing level of consciousness. The head injury instruction

sheet which is given to the patient or his attendants on his discharge from hospital or when hospital admission is not considered essential, has much to recommend it.

Not all the chapters are written with equal conviction, but for a single author work the content is comprehensive. The style is clear and the text easy to follow; the choice of illustrations and particularly the line diagrams, is very good. The references at the end of each chapter are up to date.

A study of the major disorders of the nervous system, some of which such as stroke illness or dementia are of increasing importance in our aging society will equip the embryo doctor for work in many different fields. The neurological patient, properly surveyed, offers an unrivalled experience in the skills of history taking and of clinical assessment. For students before or after qualification, this book provides an excellent foundation for further study of the nervous system, and particularly of those disorders which may have some surgical solution.

JJ MACCABE

Long-term Effects of Neuroleptics. Edited by F Cattabeni, G Racagni, PF Spano, E Costa. (Pp 660; \$78.88.) New York: Raven Press. 1980.

This large and expensive book is described as "Advances in Biochemical Psychopharmacology, Volume 24", but it is actually the proceedings of yet another symposium, held in Monte Carlo in 1979. It contains no less than 81 papers, dealing with the effects of long term neuroleptic administration on dopaminergic neurons, dopamine receptors, neurotransmitter interaction, behaviour and neuroendocrine function. There is also a section on clinical studies. Some of the findings, already available in scientific journals, are important or at least interesting. Others are trivial in the extreme and could be used as ammunition by anyone opposed to animal experiments. The book is beautifully produced but the very variable quality of its contents makes it hard to recommend it.

JL GIBBONS

Disorders of the Cerebellum. By Sid Gilman, James R Bloedel and Richard Lechtenberg. (Pp 393; \$50.00, £25.00.) Philadelphia: FA Davis Co. 1981.

The Contemporary Neurology Series al-