

Margarot, whose superb monograph on 'démence précoce' appeared in 1920.

But it would be unreasonable to demand that this modest work, edited by clinicians, should meet high historical standards. As it is, it offers enough pabulum for younger colleagues to feed on for many a winter night. It should therefore be included in all psychiatric libraries.

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MCQ Examinations in Psychiatry. By JOHN M. EAGLES and DAVID A. ALEXANDER. Aberdeen: The Aberdeen University Press. 1986. 263 pp. £10.95.

Few trainees approaching the MRCPsych examinations will be able to resist this book, which contains 300 multiple choice questions. The authors have compiled five MCQ papers based on the format of the membership examination (pre-1987) and supplied answers, referenced to support their accuracy. Apart from having a good factual knowledge, knowing when to guess is the most crucial component of good MCQ technique. Rather than offer advice on this issue, the authors invite readers to make answers with various levels of confidence (certain, doubtful or guess), and from the results to draw up their own individualised codes of guessing practice.

MCQ examinations test the breadth of the candidates' knowledge; this book aims to stimulate 'revision' as well as sharpen technique. It should continue to serve this purpose despite the recent changes in the format of the membership examination.

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The Biochemical Basis of Neuropharmacology (5th ed.). By JACK R. COOPER, FLOYD E. BLOOM and ROBERT H. ROTH. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1986. 400 pp. £25.00 (hb), £12.50 (pb).

This is the fifth and much revised edition of the most popular introductory text on the biochemical basis of neuropharmacology, by three eminent neuroscientists. It distils the enormous literature on the biochemistry and physiology of the central nervous system with emphasis on neurotransmitters in relation to the drugs which specifically affect these functions. Current research trends in the neurosciences, such as the use of molecular genetics, are well synthesised with a critical appraisal of patterns of research design and the procedures used to obtain data. Two chapters on molecular neuropharmacology and on the modulation of synaptic transmission have been added to the classical chapters on cellular foundations of neuropharmacology, metabolism in the central nervous system, and receptors and

the major chapters on specific neurotransmitters including acetylcholine, catecholamines, and neuroactive peptides. The chapter on modulation of synaptic transmission exposes the simplistic conception of point-to-point transmission between pre-synaptic and post-synaptic neurones, and offers a framework for understanding the complexity of neurotransmitter/neuromodulator/neurohormone interactions and the flexibility necessary for intergrating neurochemical with behavioural mechanisms. The authors have adhered to their original aim of presenting authoritative overviews with a few selective references rather than large bibliographies. They have also maintained the lively and entertaining style in which previous editions had been written: an earlier edition engaged the writer in what appeared to be the hitch-hikers guide to the galaxy of neurotransmitters. It is an essential reading to students of neurosciences, and it should provide a working knowledge of the subject for psychiatrists in training.

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Understanding Mental Retardation. By EDWARD ZIGLER and ROBERT M. HODAPP. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1986. 292 pp. Price £27.50 (hb), £9.95 (pb).

This book unashamedly sets out to provide a summary of the work of the Yale School of the psychology of mental retardation. For those who have valued the frequent critical reviews of Zigler and his colleagues it provides an immensely readable summary which will be valued for its scientific rigour and breadth of interest. Although nearly a third of the references are to the authors' own work, it remains an authoritative text which may be used with value by postgraduate students of all disciplines.

At a time when the concepts of social adaptation and IQ in the identification of people with mental retardation are coming under critical scrutiny, the opening chapters provide a useful account of the issues involved in the debate and argue strongly for the Yale group's insistence on a developmental perspective and aetiological approach to classification. It is persuasively concluded that overzealous avoidance of labelling may be counter-productive in depriving the person with mental handicap of the help he or she needs. For the psychiatrist, the limited discussion of personality and motivational development in a single chapter, while of theoretical interest, will seem too detached from the problems of severe maladaptive behaviour and the difficult issues of their everyday management.

Of more interest are the reviews of specific interventions, particularly in young infants, and the critical account of the search for 'miracle cures' which will prove of particular value in helping to answer the questions of concerned parents.