Neurological Abnormalities: Their Occurrence and Significance as Illustrated by an Examination of 500 *Mental Defectives.* (*Journ. of Neur. and Psychopath., vol. xiv, p.* 97, 1933.) *Gordon, R. G., Norman, R. M., and Berry, R. J. A.*

The writers made a detailed examination of the neurological signs in 167 high-grade and 333 low-grade cases of mental defect. In testing the knee jerks they made use of Strümpell's method of grading responses. Neurological abnormalities were detected in patients of all grades, but they were far more frequent among low-grade patients. The inference is drawn that the abnormalities are due, with few exceptions, to a failure of the nervous system to attain a development adequate to the performance of its intricate functions. L. S. PENROSE.

The Birth Order of 582 *Malformed Individuals.* (*Journ. Amer. Med. Assoc., vol. cv, p.* 849, *Sept.* 14, 1935.) *Murphy, D. P., and Mazer, M.*

An investigation is described of the birth ranks of 582 cases of congenital malformation: 383 of the malformations (hydrocephalus, spina bifida, etc.) were associated with the nervous system. Analysis of the observed and expected mean birth rank of the affected individuals showed that there was a significant displacement towards the end of the family. L. S. PENROSE.

Reproductive Efficiency Before and After the Birth of Malformed Children: A Study of 405 *Consecutive Families.* (*Surg. Gynec. Obstet., vol. lxii, p.* 585, *Mar.*, 1936.) *Murphy, D. P.*

The paper describes an investigation of 405 sibships, each of which contained at least 1 congenitally malformed child. The commonest malformation was hydrocephalus, 86 cases; spina bifida and anencephalus were also common. The total number of conceptions recorded was 1,732, 63% of which ended normally. Miscarriages, stillbirths and premature births occurred, more often than would have been expected by chance, in the pregnancies which immediately preceded or followed that which resulted in the birth of a malformed child. It was concluded that the congenital malformations studied may be caused by a decrease in maternal reproductive activity which may continue over a considerable period.

L. S. PENROSE.

Maternal Age at the Conception of the Congenitally Malformed Child: A Study Based on 607 *Cases.* (*Amer. Journ. Dis. Child., vol. li, p.* 1007, *May*, 1936.) *Murphy, D. P.*

The ages of the mothers at the time of the births of 607 congenitally malformed children and of their 1,583 normal sibs were ascertained. Analysis of the data, by separating the ages of the mothers into five yearly groups and pooling the families, showed that the probability of occurrence of malformed offspring increased with maternal age. The effect was particularly marked after the age of 40 years.

L. S. PENROSE.

The Incidence of Human Malformations and the Significance of Changes in the Maternal Environment in their Causation. (*Journ. Obstet. Gynæc., vol. xliv, No.* 3, *p.* 434, 1937.) *Malpas, P.*

In a series of 13,964 consecutive births in the Liverpool Maternity Hospital there were 294 cases of fœtal malformation. The age and parity of the mother were recorded in each case, and an attempt was made, by questionnaire, to obtain further information about the family histories. The commonest fœtal malformation was hydrocephalus, 58 cases; anencephalus was the next in frequency, 44 cases; and spina bifida occurred in 39 cases; there were 18 cases of mongolism.

The familial incidence of fœtal malformation was found to be very low, but there were some examples of more than one affected child in a sibship. The co-existence of more than one abnormality in the same individual was not uncommon.