

Book Reviews

Editor: Sidney Crown

A Handbook of Neuropsychological Assessment. Edited by J. R. CRAWFORD, D. M. PARKER and W. B. MCKINLAY. Hove: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. 1992. 454 pp. £40.00.

It can be difficult to be absolutely fair in reviewing a book such as this. The introduction to this multi-author volume states that it is primarily aimed at the specialising clinical psychologist, or as an introduction to the field for trainee clinical psychologists. Unfortunately, I am neither and can only comment on its relevance to a practising psychiatrist. I cannot find neuropsychology explicitly defined within its covers but the clinical conditions covered suggest it to mean those with a definite organic pathology and so specialists in these fields are especially well served. Without doubt, this situation owes as much to what tasks we, in our cognate discipline, ask neuropsychologists to undertake as it does to their own particular interests.

The volume is divided into four sections. The first aims to cover fundamental issues and opens with a chapter dealing with the basic methods of psychological assessment. This is followed by chapters on measures of intelligence and laterality, both which could equally well have fitted into the second section on the major psychological functions. Crawford's essay on the use (and the potential for abuse) of the Wechsler scales is clear, and he follows this with a discussion of tests estimating premorbid IQ. The National Adult Reading Test rightly is given pre-eminence, being simple, reliable, and widely applicable. (For instance, it has recently been shown to be a useful estimate of premorbid function in schizophrenia, a condition about which this book has disappointingly little to say, although it could be argued that it has as much right to be included as the other clinical disorders.)

The second section, at over 200 pages in length, comprises half the book, and topics range from a full discussion of the assessment of memory and its disorders, through unilateral neglect, language, and its dysfunction, to chapters on attention and frontal lobe impairment. These are not just compendiums of tests but contain critical analyses of their functional basis and their pertinence to the questions addressed. They are as useful as individual short synopses of the areas concerned as they are at forming part of the book as a whole and, with their up to date bibliographies, are

excellent introductory pointers to the more detailed literature.

The third section is on the assessment of major clinical disorders, meaning the organic dementias, substance abuse, cerebrovascular disease, and the sequelae of head injury. Although there is much here for the psycho-geriatrician and the liaison psychiatrist, it would have been nice and rather topical to see a chapter on the neuropsychological assessment of those infected with the human immunodeficiency virus rather than a small paragraph buried within the discussion of alcohol, psychoactives, volatiles and neurotoxins.

Finally, a group of chapters deal with specialised assessment techniques. McKinlay's discussion on compensation cases contains a précis on both how to handle court reports and how to handle court lawyers that is germane of all called to give expert evidence, an area usually completely ignored both in clinical texts and in clinical training.

All said and done, this is a useful book. Psychiatrists would probably find it more helpful to dip into various chapters than to attempt to read it through. A good testimonial to its importance to my clinical psychology colleagues is the copy that already graces the shelves of our financially squeezed psychiatric library.

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Women Murdered by the Men they Loved. By CONSTANCE A. BEAN. New York: Harrington Park Press. 1992. 187 pp. US \$12.95.

This book has an index and a list of some 105 references so that it has some claim to be an academic discourse. Closer inspection, however, shows that it is newspapers and books about particularly well publicised murders that the author has drawn upon rather than the criminological or psychiatric literature, and it is therefore the lurid cover which is the best guide to the contents.

The author is an expert in health education and child-birth. This book gives the impression that, having suddenly discovered wickedness, the author was unable to contain her feelings of horror and outrage and poured