describes with great clarity and deceptive simplicity the underlying concept of the subject and its techniques for the collection and interpretation of data in population studies. Practical advice is given on how to plan and conduct surveys, how to assess disease rates, prognosis and aetiology in such a way that valid conclusions may be drawn. The use of screening and the evaluation of definitive measures are considered. Many of the propositions in the text are illustrated by simple examples taken from the literature which make no demands on the mathematical abilities of the reader. It was surely unconscious humour which led the authors to criticize a paper on hang-gliding accidents because of problems with the 'floating numerator'. Stephen Lock, the Editor of the *B.M.J.*, in his foreword rightly states that 'Few things are more dispiriting for a medical editor than having to reject a paper based on a good idea but with irremediable flaws in the methods used'. An appreciation of the principles enunciated in this book are surely a prerequisite for the conduct of many aspects of medical research. It deserves to be read by all postgraduates involved in academic work and particularly by those with an interest in community medicine.

Geriatrics. Guidelines in Medicine—Volume 1

By A. N. EXTON-SMITH AND P. W. OVERSTALL. Pp. 344. MTP Press, Lancaster, 1979. £9.95.

The authors have produced in the space of 300 odd pages a most readable account of the special features of medical problems as seen in the older patient. Chapters are carefully balanced to emphasize common problems and clarity is aided by short lists and tables. For those who wish to pursue a subject in greater depth, there is a small number of carefully selected modern references (up to 1978). It is always difficult for a reviewer to refrain from the habit of medical 'fault finding' but it is unfortunate that the ECG purporting to show digoxin intoxication shows ST and T changes which are non-suggestive of ischaemia.

The book is suitable for undergraduates and for those dealing with geriatric problems either in hospital or in general practice. It is highly recommended.

Human Growth. Volume 3. Neurobiology and Nutrition

Edited by F. FALKNER AND J. M. TANNER. Pp. xviii + 606 illustrated. Baillière Tindall, London, 1979. £24.75.

This is the final volume of a series of three devoted to aspects of human growth. It comprises two main sections dealing with neurobiology and nutrition respectively. The first section contains a series of chapters concerned with the anatomical and functional growth of the brain and nervous system and the factors which affect their orderly development. The neuronal control of breathing, sleep organization and sexual differentiation of the brain are discussed together with sections on the early neurological and behavioural development. The chapter on critical periods in relation to behavioural development contains much that will fascinate the clinical paediatrician with regard to the problems of neonatal separation and adoption.

The second section of this volume is concerned with nutrition and its relation to growth and development. The topics on the nutritional aspects of growth in infancy, protein-energy malnutrition, obesity and population status receive extensive treatment. The important problem of nutrition in relation to the development of the brain and its functions are fully considered.

The final chapter gives a fascinating but concise account of the history of growth studies from Buffon in the 18th century to the present day. The publication of this volume completes a series which is destined to become a standard work. It is commended to paediatricians, neonatologists and specialists in the growth and development of children as an outstanding

contribution to their growth subjects and a valuable source of reference.

Local Analgesia

By C. JOLLY. 2nd edition. Pp. vii + 144, illustrated. H. K. Lewis, London, 1979. £5.00.

Variety is one of the pleasures of anaesthetic practice, for many methods are usually available—and apparently equally effective—for the solution of the same clinical problem. Our current inability to show any overall differences between patients anaesthetized by totally dissimilar techniques is certainly a reflection of present-day ignorance. A danger of this situation is that, because in general one cannot show that approach A is any better than approach B to an anaesthetic problem, it is not difficult to make a strong but usually illogical case for approach A, B or Z being universally the best method and the only one that should be used. Until recently the use of local anaesthetic methods was a prime example of this form of polarization. Schools of thought existed that claimed that local analgesia was the method above all of providing ideal conditions for the surgeon and patient or, alternatively, that local techniques had no place in modern anaesthetic practice. In the last few years members of both camps have probably come to realize that truth lies somewhere between these extremes.

Where does the second edition of this small book, coming 17 years after it first appeared, fit into the present spectrum? It is not intended for those who want to know when it is best to use a local technique, for it discusses virtually no alternatives. Nor is it aimed at those who want to learn how to perform various blocks, or useful as a reference book, for the number of local blocks described is limited and the book contains a mere 19 line drawings (the lifeblood of all standard books on local techniques). It would seem then that this book has little to offer anyone, but this is not quite true. Dr Jolly has a fund of clinical wisdom and sound experience derived from his great experience of local analgesia, and hidden away throughout the book are small gems—concerned not with how to put a needle near a nerve or how much of what drug to inject where, but how to handle a patient, how to deal with or avoid complications. This would, in fact, have been a much better book if Dr Jolly had eschewed all the descriptive sections (which are covered very adequately in numerous other texts) and devoted himself to the management of surgical procedures using local anaesthetic techniques.

The Medical Report and Testimony

By GERALD H. PEARCE. Foreword by the Right Honourable Mr Justice Melford Stevenson. Pp. 104, 1979. £6.50.

This book sets out to explain an important and often neglected area of co-operation between the medical and legal professions. The author, a consultant orthopaedic surgeon has drawn on his long experience of reporting in personal injury cases to explain the essentials of preparing medical reports and to give both professions a mutual understanding of each other's points of view and problems. Any doctor or lawyer would benefit from reading the book whether an experienced or novice practitioner.

The author deals with one running sore between the professions whereby solicitors delay payment of a doctor's report fee until an action is settled. The author rightly condemns that approach which aggrieves many a doctor.

There is a useful chapter on the approximate periods of total and partial disability resulting from more common injuries. The glossaries of medical and legal terms are the least successful parts of the book. No doubt because of limited space the author had to be excessively selective but the space taken up would be much better used by referring the reader to legal and medical encyclopaedias. Future

editions might very usefully deal with agreement of medical reports by lawyers and also with the difficulties experienced by lawyers in comparing the different methods of measuring joint movements.

Nevertheless this book is a useful introduction to this subject for doctors and lawyers alike.

Neuroanaesthesia

By MORLIN MARSHALL. *Current Topics in Anaesthesia* Series No. 3. Pp. ix+78, illustrated. Edward Arnold, London, 1979. £6.75.

It is difficult to reconcile the contents of this book with the intentions expressed by the general editors of the series—to present authoritative reviews on topics in which there is a need for a digest of current literature or for a clear statement of the relevance of new information. Little is available here that will not be found in any recent standard text book and no aspects of the subject are treated in depth. This is probably inevitable in a book of less than 80 pages, and the anecdotal rather than authoritative style of much of the text does at least confer the advantage of readability.

Much of the emphasis and advice in the book reflect the author's viewpoint and the less well informed reader should be aware that these views do not always agree with more widely held opinions. The first section of the book considers cerebral mechanics and haemodynamics. Important aspects such as autoregulation and the effects of drugs on intracranial pressure are considered in the sketchiest of outlines. The advocacy of frusemide in preference to mannitol for the lowering of a raised ICP does not reflect current thinking or practice. Later on, some empirical methods of calibrating monitoring equipment are recommended which could not be said to describe a proper use of such apparatus. A noisy pressure-cycled ventilator is advocated as a useful monitor of ventilation! Negative pressure ventilation is proposed to prevent falls of cardiac output in the sitting position, but the dangers of this technique are not mentioned. Stressing the dangers of right heart catheterization as opposed to the relative rarity of fatal air embolus does not appear to be logical.

The best part of this book is contained in the last three chapters covering neurosurgical emergencies, diagnostic procedures, the specific problems of various disease states and procedures.

This book reflects anaesthetic practice in one neurosurgical unit. As such, it may be useful for the occasional neurosurgical anaesthetist aware of the limitations of such an approach.

Operative Surgery. Fundamental International Techniques. Plastic Surgery

Edited by J. WATSON AND R. M. MCCORMACK. 3rd edn, Pp. 556, illustrated. Butterworths, London, Boston, 1979. £55.00.

The main tasks of plastic surgeons are the treatment of congenital deformities, the repair of wounds and the replacement of missing tissue with reconstitution of form and function where these have been lost by trauma, malignancy or other disease. To-day also there is an increase in demand for aesthetic surgery to improve on nature.

Against this increasing demand we welcome this magnificent atlas, part of what will eventually be a 19-volume magnum opus on the whole range of operative surgery. This volume on plastic surgery deals with the whole field of general reconstructive surgery, excluding only such exotica as the correction of craniofacial abnormalities. Forty experts from the United Kingdom, the U.S.A., Europe and Japan give dogmatic accounts of the techniques which they have found of personal value. Each section is very fully and beautifully illustrated—as is typical of textbooks on plastic surgery—and is accompanied by a clear text. Of particular

interest is the up-to-date section on microsurgery and the free transplantation of full thickness flaps by this technique. However, an omission is any discussion of the very difficult problems (both ethical and technical) presented by breast reconstruction after mastectomy.

This is a book that will appeal both to plastic surgeons and to general surgeons who so often find that they require help in reconstructive problems following major surgical procedures. It can be recommended as a delightful atlas in this important subject.

Patients and Their Doctors. The Journey Through Medical Care

By GLIN BENNET. Pp. xiii+217. Baillière Tindall, London, 1979. £3.75 (paperback).

In our world of medicine the three most essential items are the illness, the patients and the doctors looking after them. This book analyses the interwoven patterns uniting these three factors. The first couple of chapters are devoted to analysing illness and the balance between health and disease. Why (not how) has that person taken ill, and why now? This is a question often asked by the patient but not quite so often by his doctor. This is followed by seven chapters on a patient's journey through medical care from the first interview via nurses, social workers, ward routines, anticipation of surgery and the postoperative period.

The author records inaccurately one of Dr George Beaumont's famous Tuesday afternoon postgraduate teaching rounds at the Middlesex Hospital, possibly because he had been mauled by the great man for missing a duodenal diverticulum. It is a misinterpretation to describe Beaumont's arrival in a large chauffeur-driven car and the door being opened by an official. Beau drove himself in a tiny car and, because of his arthritis, was glad to have Mac the porter ease him out of it. Even more important, the author fails to appreciate how the patients enjoyed every moment of these ward rounds. They had absolute confidence in the great man and the discipline he instilled in his whole team. In reading these limp 217 pages, one feels wistfully that George Beaumont could have written them so very much better.

The doctors themselves are the subject of the last four chapters. It makes a sorry picture with high rates for suicide, divorce, alcoholism, drug abuse and psychiatric consultation. The only group that can be excluded from this sordid analysis are women doctors for they are dismissed somewhat contemptuously in a single page—one quarter of which is allowed for the wives of doctors.

Post-Mortem Procedures (An Illustrated Textbook)

By G. A. GRESHAM AND A. F. TURNER. Pp. 160, illustrated. Wolfe Medical Publications, London, 1979. £8.00.

Professor Gresham and Mr Turner are a morbid anatomist, and a higher senior post-mortem technician respectively, and they appear to be writing for those intending to work in either capacity. A large proportion of their book consists of dissection techniques which are clearly described and illustrated. There is a lot of emphasis on procedures related to coroner's cases, rightly so, since such cases probably form the majority of post-mortems in non-Metropolitan pathology departments.

A useful section on special techniques and laboratory methods includes procedures which may be unfamiliar to many pathologists, such as sodium and potassium determination from the eye and tissue sampling for chromosomal abnormalities, as well as the familiar ones. Short sections on documentation and post-mortem room procedures will be useful for the comparatively inexperienced mortuary technician and the more senior technician preparing for examinations will find the chapter summaries in the form of revision notes particularly valuable.

This book is an admirable introduction to post-mortem