The second part is concerned with laboratory data giving normal values (including SI units in parentheses) followed by rather lengthy lists of diseases where departures from these norms are given. The third part is called 'Disease Patterns' of diagnostic clues for diseases and syndromes, when the names of diseases are followed by a very brief definition and a few lines on symptoms, signs and laboratory or radiological features. Finally, there is a short, but up-to-date bibliography and an adequate index.

This lay out is logical within its defined frame-work and the print is clear, though in parts may strain middle-aged eyes. There are a number of hand-drawn illustrations which, while often adequate, underline the problems of attempting in this way to illustrate both physical signs and especially methods of examination, e.g. percussion.

The text, in the largest portion of the book devoted to symptoms and signs, is very detailed, sometimes excessively so, for example – in taking practically a full page to describe how to record the patient's full name or how to arrange the drapes for 'a routine examination in the office'. Written descriptions of clinical methods are never easy but the authors make a real effort to achieve lucidity. Some of their descriptions seem somewhat surprisingly old-fashioned – the 'soft rubber tubing' in the two pages of description of the stethoscope and the terminology, especially in the section on chest examination, is dated and over complex. 'The rales are coarse rhonchi or wheezes or gurgles' would, I feel, cause confusion on the average British ward. Despite these reservations the text is wide ranging; most common, and many less common, signs and clinical methods are described. Various differences of transatlantic terminology inevitably arise. The long descriptions of 'tympanites' in the abdominal section; the preference for 'Hoover's direct damped percussion' (a one-handed technique) over 'the methods employed for sonorous percussion' in the three pages devoted to percussion of the heart are amongst the more striking examples.

The need for brevity in the third, disease pattern, section has led to some ambiguity and occasionally to actual factual errors. The description of amaurosis fugax as 'a symptom of reduced cerebral circulation' is deficient while that of angioneurotic oedema being due to a 'deficiency of C'esterase in the hereditary form' is just wrong.

Although this book contains a great deal of information I feel that its place in the pockets of British students and house officers will be limited though their American counterparts may find it more accessible and rewarding.

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Methods in Clinical Trials in Neurology, edited by R. Capildeo & J.-M. Orgogozo. Pp. xi + 327. Stockton Press, The Macmillan Press, Basingstoke, London, 1988. £48.

Books which are based primarily on meetings or workshops frequently turn out, in my experience, to be disappointing, largely due to the relative lack of enthusiasm of the authors who often regard the writing up of their presentations as a chore. This volume, edited by R. Capildeo and J.-M. Orgogozo is one of those rare exceptions to this tendency.

Although based on a workshop, this book contains a number of high-quality, interesting and detailed essays on methods in clinical trials in neurology with special reference to vascular and degenerative brain diseases.

There are two main sections, the first dealing with general aspects of clinical trials and the second is concerned with a series of critiques of clinical trials which have been performed in cerebrovascular disease, Parkinson's disease and dementia. The four general chapters on the methodology and evaluation of clinical trials are comprehensive and well-written, although most clinicians will almost certainly have difficulty following the mathematical analyses contained in the section on Choice and Analysis of Judgement Criteria. The 11 chapters on specific clinical neurological trials encompass both the methodology and results of clinical trials in the fields of migraine, prevention of transient ischaemic attacks and stroke, Parkinson's disease and dementia. The analyses are detailed and critical and I particularly liked the numerous one-page summaries of past trials with general comments on their overall validity. An additional and original feature of this volume is the inclusion of complementary chapters detailing the ideal requirements for future clinical trials in the various specialist fields which have been covered in the previous chapter. The standard of the contributions is uniformly high, the style consistent on the whole and the general presentation of the book is good. In summary, this is a thoroughly worthwhile volume on a supremely important subject. I certainly learned a good deal and will find it a very useful reference source. All neurologists would benefit from reading this book or at least scrutinizing it, and it should be on the shelves of all Departments of Neurology and Medical Libraries.

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Practical NMR Imaging, edited by M.A. Foster and J.M.S. Hutchison. Pp. 328, illustrated. IRL Press, Oxford, Washington DC, 1987. £36 (hardback).

This is a succinct text from established British workers in the field. It consists of ten chapters ranging from a summary of the general physical principles to advanced imaging techniques and *in vivo* spectroscopy. The stated aim of the book is to provide researchers, new to the field, with guidance on how to put their equipment to best use. In this respect it succeeds very well, and the book contains a wealth of information on many of the practical aspects of magnetic resonance imaging and spectroscopy. It is not, and does not claim to be, a comprehensive textbook, and a basic understanding of the technique is assumed. The subject is treated in a logical fashion from considerations of siting and installation, through practical image testing and slice shape measurement and optimisation. Later chapters consider the technical aspects of various imaging sequences and illustrate their clinical application. A concise account of the clinical use of paramagnetic contrast agents (in particular Gd-DTPA) is given in chapter seven, and this is well illustrated with clinical cases. A chapter on advanced imaging covers diverse topics including respiratory and cardiac gating, phase mapping, and the now-

popular fast imaging techniques. This chapter deals with many complex issues and, of necessity, it touches only briefly on some of its sub-headings. Like the book as a whole, it is comprehensively referenced.

There are some minor criticisms. Chapter five deals with NMR in clinical practice within and without the central nervous system, and many of the images contained in this chapter are, by today's standards, dated. There are some factual errors in this and in the opening chapter which have escaped the editors' scrutiny; for example the implication in the opening chapter that the chemical shift effect is due to a change in the nuclear magnetogyric ratio may be a source of some confusion to those unfamiliar with the basic physics.

Although written more with the physicist than the physician in mind, this book should give the interested radiologist a helpful insight into many aspects of this complex field. For those with a serious interest in clinical NMR research, it should be considered essential reading.

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Recent Advances in Clinical Immunology – 4, edited by R.A. Thompson. Pp. 226, illustrated. Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh, London, Melbourne, New York, 1988. £38.

In the world of immunology, as in *Alice through the Looking Glass*, it is necessary to run fast in order to stay in the same place. The struggle is made easier by these essays, written by several internationally known authors who have managed to put some of the most topical (and confusing) immunological theories into perspective. Many examples are included, ranging from the basic scientific aspects of interleukins to the clinical topic of allergen immunotherapy.

As the regulating functions of interleukins have slowly been unravelled, we need to know more about how their

production is controlled and their effects are produced. An excellent chapter by Cannon and Dinarello covers this field well. The cascade reactions which deal with complement activation, inflammation and clotting have many defects which arise because of defective 'switch off' mechanisms. In their chapter Boswell and Carroll have placed these deficiencies in context, especially those of CI inhibitor and of α_1 -antitrypsin, within the newly recognized family of proteinase inhibitors which are the serpins.

Readers who are concerned about the ramifications of the macrophage family will appreciate John Crocker's chapter on this subject, with its comments on the handling and modifying of antigens by somewhat similar cells with different names (and by somewhat different cells with almost the same names). There are also good chapters on AIDS, B cell neoplasms, the immunological control of fertility, and diseases which are – at least in part – mediated by anti-receptor antibodies.

One of the most tantalizing chapters is that on allergen immunotherapy, which appears to have been written before the Committee for Safety in Medicines issued its review. The unfortunate events which led to the CSM's critical comments and their recommendation of a two hour wait after treatment do not correspond with the views and experience of those working in the United States, where the material which is injected may differ and treatment is usually carried out by people who use the method extensively and are therefore experienced in dealing with adverse reactions. In advocating a 20 minute wait after each injection, the authors of this chapter are certainly out of line with CSM recommendations; but the last word on the subject has not yet been spoken.

All in all, this is a very worthwhile book which will appeal especially to those who are interested in the clinical relevance of basic scientific advances.

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Books Received

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Dictionary of Toxicology, edited by Ernest Hodgson/Richard B. Mailman/Janice E. Chambers. Pp. ix + 395. Macmillan Reference Books, Basingstoke, Hants, 1988. £39.50.

The MRCGP Study Book, second edition, E. Gambrill, A. Moulds, J. Fry, D. Brooks. Pp. viii + 187. Butterworths, London; Update-Siebert Publications, Guildford, Surrey, 1988. £14.95.