Further Section

Neuroepidemiology 1986;5:60

P.J.D.

Evans, Dr.

London

Book Review

R. Rizzi, M. Visentin Pain

Butterworth Group, Sevenoaks 1984 XII + 488 pp.; £ 35.00 ISBN 0-407-01057-2

This book follows a trend whereby the proceedings of a meeting are reported in full. On this occasion it was the Meeting of the European Chapters of the International Association for the Study of Pain. Some 80 individual papers are reported and, no doubt to increase the speed of publication, the typed manuscripts have been photo printed. This is my first criticism about this book since the typeface soon becomes very tiring to the eye. The second concerns the multi-author nature of the text. There is wide variation in both the quality and contents of the manuscripts and it would have been more appropriate for the editors to omit unsatisfactory papers. A technique which has been used successfully by other publishers. The organisers of the meeting chose three subjects for discussion: the neck-shoulder-arm pain syndrome; pain in children, and pain control in malignancies of the vertebral column. Under these headings a number of aspects are considered. The first subject is dealt with extensively considering that in many textbooks only a few paragraphs are devoted to it. Reference is made to diagnostic techniques such as cervicomotography to the clinical aspects and ways of presentation as well as to physical and pharmacological methods of treatment. Some chapters seem curiously misplaced in this section, for instance, the inclusion of chapters on the pharmacokinetics in advanced cancer and the use of neurolytic drugs would have been better suited to the cancer section, whilst the chapter on the pharmacokinetics of epidural morphine is totally meaningless. Perhaps the best aspect of this section is the discussion of the disorders of muscle activity and some of the non-invasive ways to deal with the problem. Autogenic training and post-isometric relaxation are both described.

The second section dealing with chronic pain in children is without doubt the best part of the book. It is an area which has been much neglected and some very good chapters have been written. The subjects discussed include: pain measurement; headache; orthopaedic pain, and the pain associated with malignancies.

The final section looks at the available treatment for spinal malignancies. A number of chapters have been written by known authorities, yet there is little to excite the reader.

Standard forms of therapy are discussed including the use of opiates, neurolytic techniques and pituitary ablation. The only new subject to be reviewed was the use of spinal opiates and the papers tended to provide only anecdotal evidence of efficacy.

I. It is difficult to know the place of this book as the value of the content is so varied. However

I feel that it is an edition that libraries and pain clinics should carry if only to give insight into the various avenues of research. It is rather an expensive book and I feel that the individual physician could get most of the important information from one of the standard textbooks.