October 1-4, 1983. Rossiter Research Conference. "Structure and Function of Biological Membranes". Contact: Rossiter Research Conference, c/o Mrs. Betty Hatch, University Hospital, P.O. Box 5339, Stn. A, London, Ontario, N6A 5A5.

October 9-13, 1983. VIIth International Congress of Electromyography, Munich. Contact: A. Struppler, Neurologische Klina der Technischen, Universitat, Mohlstrasse 28, 8000 Munchen, 80, FRG.

October 10-15, 1983. VI Pan American Congress of Neurology. Buenos Aires, Argentina. Contact: Dr. Tomas Inausti, Avda Sante Fe 1145 (1059), Buenos Aires, Argentina.

November 6-11, 1983. 13th Annual Meeting, Society for Neuroscience, Boston, MA. Deadline for receipt of abstracts is May 13, 1983. Contact Nancy Beang, Executive Secretary, Society for Neuroscience, 9650 Rockville Pike, Bethseda, MA 20814.

Book Review

"Neural Aging and Its Implications in Human Neurological Pathology", (Aging, Volume 18), 1982. Edited by R.D. Terry, C.L. Bolis and G. Toffano. Published by Raven Press, New York. 270 pages $31.00 U.S.

This most recent addition to the Raven Press series of monographs on Aging is based on a symposium sponsored by the World Health Organization in 1980. Its 26 chapters suffer from the frequently patchy quality which plagues many such multi-authored compilations. With only 10 of its 52 authors from North America, contributions include papers from such diverse sources as Nairobi, Dakar, Sao Paulo and Moscow.

Chapters of a mere 2 or 3 pages, such as those by Fieschi and Di Piero (Rome) or Pepeu (Florence) are so scanty that any comments seem excessive. Papers dealing largely with psychosocial factors, such as that by Nakamura (Tokyo) in which we are informed "It seems necessary to give the old a social role and let them participate in social activities", appear misplaced in a text devoted to implications of aging in neurological pathobiology. In a study of inflammatory processes in the nervous system of the aged by Levy and Mion (Brazil), more than half of their 652 patients were only in the 3rd and 4th decades of life. Difficulty with the English language might explain some of the deficiencies, such as Orlovskaya's comment, "In clinical practice, the autonomy of the brain appears as a dissociation between somatic and mental aging changes", or the opinion of Constantinidis (Geneva) that Alzheimer's disease is clinically characterized by "instrumental aphasopractognosic disorders". The unavoidable time lag until publication also permits certain statements which already require updating. For example Terry (New York), acknowledging that confirmation is still lacking, suggests the use of the fetal neuron tissue culture model for inducing paired helical filaments described by de Boni and Crapper has "implications ... of great importance"; yet nearly 5 years later, neither those original authors nor any other investigators have been able to reproduce the experiment. A few contributors appear strained to have made any connection with the aging theme; in the paper on neuron-glia interactions and aging, Bolis (Switzerland) provided 9 pages about glial cells, and then only 1 page dealing with their changes in aging.

On the other hand, some chapters are very germane to the field. Gottfries (Goteborg) offers a good summary of the sometimes conflicting evidence on changes in the monoamines in aging and the organic dementias. The discussion of dementia as a primarily subcortical disease by Amaducci and co-workers provides data consistent with the possibility that a common biochemical deficit — diminished levels of choline acetyltransferase — underlies several forms of dementia having very different histopathology. That paper also contains ample reference to the increasingly popular suggestion that massive nerve cell loss from the basal nucleus of Meynert within the substantia innominata may explain the neocortical cholinergic defect in senile dementia Alzheimer type. A brief discussion of neurosurgically treatable age-related disorders by Escobedo and Ruben (Mexico), while reminding us that recognition and treatment of patients with normal pressure hydrocephalus are of great importance in providing a "cure" of a clinical condition resembling senile dementia, regrettably adds no new knowledge to the dilemma of deciding which patients belong to that minority who will, in fact, improve after shunting. The longest chapter with the greatest number of references, by Roth (Cambridge), is a thorough overview for those who have yet to hear Sir Martin expound on organic dementias. Occasional nuggets can be discovered, such as his statement that no psychiatric or neurological deficits are associated with the huge numbers of neurofibrillary tangles present in the cerebral cortex of mentally well-preserved Chamorros, who develop this lesion at a much earlier age than Caucasians on the same island of Guam.

While tighter editing might have produced more even quality, the editors admit to having provided "only minimal changes ... in preparation for publication". Following a symposium designed to provide an international effort to attack a universal health problem, it is probably difficult to envisage how they might have done otherwise. Nonetheless, it behooves neuroscientists pursuing the biology of the aging nervous system to add this monograph to their collection.

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