

these results are derived from a small sample, they are nonetheless quite promising'' (p. 60). Elsewhere: ''analysis of data is still at an early stage; we have not yet completed the methodology . . .'' (p. 118). Why not, then, resist the temptation to fly to Zurich? An article with the interesting title ''Essential Fatty Acids, Prostaglandins and the Brain'' lamely concludes that ''the proposed role of prostaglandins . . . is so tenuous and controversial . . . that it does not merit further comment'' (p. 357). Neither choline nor lecithin nor vasopressin nor levodopa had an effect upon most patients with Alzheimer's disease, or so it would tentatively and preliminarily appear. Many important problems associated with Alzheimer's disease are hinted at, but are, unfortunately, not expounded:

1. What is known of the natural history of Alzheimer's disease?
2. Is Alzheimer's disease a form of premature aging?
3. Can defective memory be restored in older patients or those with Alzheimer's disease? Can the disease be halted or reversed?
4. Is it proper to subdivide the disease by age alone into presenile and senile forms, or is the disorder more complex?
5. Do patients with Alzheimer's disease have defects of different systems or types of neurotransmitters? Are neurons synthesizing dopamine or serotonin involved?
6. What is the role of prostaglandins?
7. How can we best measure the clinical, psychologic, and neurologic defects of the patient with Alzheimer's disease?
8. What are the effects on this disease of systemic disorders and nutritional status?

A future publication on ''progress in research'' may have the answers that are lacking here.

Martin G. Netsky, M.D.

The Aging Brain: Cellular and Molecular Mechanisms of Aging in the Nervous System. *Aging, Volume 20*, E. Giacobini, G. Filogram, G. Giacobini, and A. Vernadakis, Editors, Raven Press, New York, 1982, 292 pp. Price: \$35.00.

This volume contains 25 papers by 74 authors. Almost all the reports are in the form of journal articles. Should a book be the same as a journal? I think not. The delay in publishing a book should at least be compensated by greater depth of thought, broader views of subjects, and, most of all, by synthesis of data. The papers in this volume are categorized by aspects of aging of cells, of membranes and cytoskeleton, neurotransmission mechanisms, receptors, and ''human and clinical correlates of brain aging.'' A sense of unity, however, is lacking. The authors study selected species, use a special technique, and analyze the minutiae of a particular part of the neuron or even muscle. Data are presented as if they alone were important, rather than their significance. Synthesis is lacking except in the opening article, although the closing chapter makes a feeble attempt.

There is no indication of how these papers were accumulated, whether they were presented at a meeting, solicited by the editors, or competitively submitted. In general, the papers are of better quality than in Volume 19 on Alzheimer's disease, although many would be rejected by journals using critical reviewers. Cutler, in the opening article, brings together data on effects of aging on DNA and genes, as well as

correlation of biochemical values with maximum life span of various species. The final chapter by the senior editor is more of a catalog of changes found in the aging nervous system rather than a synthesis. Readers would do better to peruse those medical journals where greater selectivity is exercised. A Medline listing would give the searcher more information than is available here.

Most of the text has been typewritten and then photographed. Was the publisher more interested in the financial reward than in commitment to the endeavor? I doubt that the time saved by using this process is significant. The esthetic effect on the book, in my judgment, is deplorable.

Martin G. Netsky, M.D.