

lead metabolism, pathological effects of lead, diagnosis, prophylaxis, and treatment. The authors have rendered a valuable contribution to workers in this field by their summation of a large number of references, with the appropriate information suitably presented. The span of the subject covered is so wide that the authors at times reveal the limitations of their experience and knowledge in certain aspects of the field. For example, on page 81 they state that 'protoporphyrin may occasionally be detected in increased amounts in the urine in lead poisoning' (Waldron, unpublished data). The findings of a dicarboxylic porphyrin in the urine would indeed be such a unique event that the author should rush this into print as soon as possible. In their presentation of the symptomatology of acute intermittent porphyria and lead poisoning, they come to the conclusion that the common symptomatology is co-incidental and is not indicative of a common underlying metabolic disorder. In coming to this decision the authors have made an incomplete statement of the present enzyme defects in acute intermittent porphyria (e.g., depression of uroporphyrinogen synthetase) and they fail to recognize that we are unaware at present of the underlying metabolic disorder in both of these conditions, and therefore it would seem rash to come to their conclusion at this particular time. Their clinical and therapeutic appreciation, although competent, lacks a completeness of the knowledge of the literature which other aspects of the book show. A few spelling errors occasionally mar the script.

Nevertheless the authors have made many excellent points in their appreciation of the present problem of subclinical lead poisoning. They point out, for example, that the present threshold limit values apply only to adult males and thus their application to whole populations, especially children, is inadmissible when assessing health standards from airborne lead. Their appreciation of sources of lead and its effects on certain tissues is good, although recent work is moving so rapidly that it is partly and unavoidably out of date. Finally, they have summarized and adopted certain conclusions about the general problem of environmental lead pollution. The whole subject has become controversial and one which has been obscured by frenetic overkill at both ends of the spectrum of controversy. The reviewer believes that the truth might unfold somewhere between these two extremes. As the authors point out, 'there is no justification in assuming that individuals are in a state of lead balance in view of the unequivocal evidence that total body burdens of lead rise with age, due mainly to increasing skeletal deposition. Further, increased dissemination of lead into the environment is certain to add to the body burden by increasing exposure through the air and diet'.

The collection of evidence of metabolic and other effects, particularly in children, suggests that it is wise to keep lead exposure to a minimum. On balance this book therefore has made a significant contribution to environmental health.

A. GOLDBERG

**The Practical Management of Head Injuries, 3rd edition.** By John M. Potter. (Pp. 98; 8 figs; £2.00). London: Lloyd-Luke Medical Books. 1974.

This is the third edition of one of the most valuable small books on head injuries which is available. It is not intended for neurosurgeons but for doctors and senior nurses who on occasion are responsible for the care of these cases. The book is dedicated to one of the author's teachers, the late Sir Hugh Cairns, the pioneer of crash helmets for motor cyclists. As a direct result of his work protective helmets are now worn by many more workers in industry, with the consequence that the mortality and morbidity from head injury has fallen considerably. The majority of head injuries are due to road accidents but many cases still arise in the dockyards, mines, etc. Nursing staff in the ambulance rooms of these industries are likely to benefit by having a copy of this small treatise on head injuries close at hand. From their point of view Chapter 2, where the author describes the management in casualty departments, will prove to be the most valuable. The short chapter on convalescence, rehabilitation, and sequelae will appeal to the audience to whom the book is addressed. The considerable experience of the author is well displayed and also his ability to distinguish and emphasize the most important aspects of his subject.

The book is reasonably priced and well printed with a small number of excellent line drawings. Doctors and senior nurses who have contact with cases of head injury will find this book well worth buying.

L. P. LASSMAN

**Forensic Toxicology. Proceedings of a symposium held at the Chemical Defence Establishment, Porton Down, 29-30 June 1972.** Edited by B. Ballantyre. (Pp. 157; £4.25). Bristol: Wright. 1974.

Toxicology is the science of poisons and embraces many fields which are often compartmentalized. There is the impact of chemicals or drugs on man when exposure is occupational or environmental or during medical treatment. This report of a symposium is intended to cover forensic toxicology defined in the preface as 'a specialization dealing with the legal and medical aspects of the detrimental effects of chemicals on humans'. Of paramount importance for forensic toxicology, as for the other branches of toxicology, is the diagnosis of the cause of the poisoning. For gross exposure the analytical problems and clinical picture can often be definitive, but with the growing number of highly active chemicals the problems become very acute. Decisions on diagnosis or hazard require knowledge of mode of action, and often sophisticated biochemical and analytical methods are utilized. At this level forensic toxicology becomes almost indistinguishable from other branches which this volume illustrates well. The contributions range from discussion of techniques to the mode of action of hallucinogens or lead. The chemicals discussed include barbiturates, morphine, methadone, hallucinogens, anticholinesterases, paraquat, cyanide, carbon monoxide, lead, and mercury.

This small volume will provide interesting reading for all those concerned with exposure of man to chemicals. The papers are well written and, because they are not definitive reviews overlaid with references, easily read. The collection together in one volume of contributions with such diverse aims reinforces the view that only a