

## **BOOK REVIEW**

**The Neurobiology of Pain.** Edited by A. V. Holden and W. Winlow.  
Manchester University Press, 1984. + 414 pp. Price £35 (hb), £14 (pb).

I enjoyed reading this book, but it is a curious mixture of papers which vary from detailed accounts of quite specialized aspects of the neurobiology of pain to brief summaries of broad fields. It is certainly different from the usual accounts of pain and is an attempt to inject more basic science into a subject which commonly has predominantly clinical considerations.

There are two opening chapters on cellular neurobiology. These are well written but there is surprisingly little attempt to relate them to specific problems in pain research. The next section on receptors and peripheral conduction is perhaps the best in the book with excellent concise reviews by Matthews, Mumford and Lynn. The review by Clarke on trigeminal nuclei should have been grouped with the next section which deals with spinal mechanisms. Both this and the subsequent section on central mechanisms of necessity can only deal with certain aspects as the field is large. The clinical summaries by Lipton are very brief. I found the chapter on central pathways by Bowsher particularly informative but he has some curious comments on how morphine affects the brain. The central peptides receive only one chapter (Dockray) which is mainly on distribution with minimal attention to function. The final section deals with general anaesthetics.

The preface states that the book is intended for undergraduate medical students and post graduate science students. Although I would strongly recommend its purchase by research oriented persons it is not a book for medical students. At £14 even PhD students can afford it.

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