

Moving problems

J.P. Paul

Clinical Biomechanics. Editors A. Kim Burton and Jon H. Thomson. *John Wright*. 4/yr. UK £46; North America £99; elsewhere £53.

THE stated aim of *Clinical Biomechanics* is "to encourage interdisciplinary communication of the clinical aspects of biomechanics related to dysfunction of the musculoskeletal system".

Of the papers published in its first year, approximately 50 per cent deal with the lumbar spine, its morphology, its pathologies, its functions in lifting and other ergonomic aspects. Approximately 20 per cent of the remaining articles relate to the loading of joints in the limbs in normal and pathological situations. Other papers deal with gait, endoprostheses, pain, fracture and other injuries and rehabilitation. Selections of abstracts from other journals are also published; *Spine* is easily the most cited, followed at a long distance by *Ergonomics* and also *Scandinavian Journal of Rehabilitation Medicine*. It remains to be seen whether the journal maintains this bias towards problems of the lumbar spine, or moves to more general coverage of material in accordance with its aims.

The papers are medium to short in length, without extensive mathematical analysis, and concentrate on biomechanical measurement and clinical assessment. Each issue has an editorial comment on a relevant topic, along with book reviews.

This is a high-quality production, with clear type and good illustrations. Generally the photographs are in black-and-white, though sometimes colour is used. I felt, however, that the line diagrams and graphs were too often straight copies of computer-screen images or computer print-outs with corresponding deficiencies of the lettering. Also, in the captions there is some inadequacy in descriptions of quantities presented.

The material published has included unrefereed papers from symposia and letters to the editor about previous articles. The papers themselves appear to reach printed form between three and seven months from first submission.

To my mind, the scope of *Clinical Biomechanics* lies between that of *Journal of Biomechanics* and that of *Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery*, with a leaning towards the latter. The papers appear to be carefully reviewed and proof-read. Advertising is included, and the price is reasonable: the cost per page, averaged over the year, is in the middle range for comparable publications. □

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Work in disorder

Alan N. Davison

Metabolic Brain Disease. Editor-in-chief David W. McCandless. *Plenum*. 4/yr. US \$47.50 (individual), \$115 (institutional); elsewhere \$55 (individual), \$129 (institutional).

THIS new journal is intended for publication of original high-quality contributions on both clinical and basic aspects of disorders involving brain metabolism. Each issue contains a review of up to 26 pages (about 600 words per page) and some six original papers of varying length. Short book reviews and occasional correspondence will also be published. There are no page charges, and it is intended that publication will be rapid (eight months from the time of acceptance). The journal is of a small, attractive format, and the layout of

the contributions is excellent.

The editorial board is predominantly American, with the chief editor's office in Houston, Texas. In the first volume most of the articles originate from the board itself and, predictably, are of a good standard. They cover a wide area, ranging from inherited neurological conditions to neurotoxicity in animals. Nevertheless, all the papers could well have been published in existing publications such as the *Journal of Neurochemistry*.

With time, perhaps, the scope of the journal will be more focused, for example on aspects of energy metabolism and its relationship to neurological disease. I would also suggest that the reviews need to be carefully selected and critically edited with the specialist rather than the general reader in mind. □

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Liverish exchange

A.E. Read

Journal of Hepatology. Editor-in-chief Dame Sheila Sherlock. *Elsevier*. 24/yr. Dfl. 740 plus carriage charges.

UNTIL 1985 there was only one specialist journal of hepatology in the English language. So the arrival of a second — the *Journal of Hepatology*, Journal of the European Association for the Study of the Liver (EASL) — was timely.

The editor-in-chief is Dame Sheila Sherlock, a distinguished clinical and experimental hepatologist. She is supported by an editorial board of 40 colleagues, who represent hepatology worldwide though most of them come from Europe. The standard of presentation is good, and the photographs — occasionally in colour — and other illustrations are clear.

The contents of the journal consist of original scientific papers, reviews, book reviews and announcements of interest to hepatologists (meetings and so on). There are usually 12–15 papers in each issue; topics are widespread and range from basic science to clinical practice, with the accent on the latter. The most popular subjects are portal hypertension and virus B hepatitis. This is likely to reflect the fact that these topics are probably the main growing points in hepatology generally, rather than indicating any pre-selection. It is noteworthy that the period between acceptance and publication of papers is consistently less than six months which is a major achievement. The papers are of rather variable quality but, overall, in view of the large number of referees (nearly 260 are listed as looking at papers which

appear in Vols 2 and 3), such an international refereeing system is praiseworthy though probably cumbersome.

Book reviews are usually confined to one or two volumes per issue and are fairly brief (one wonders, incidentally, how much would-be purchasers are deflected by a bad review, which in any case usually appears long after the would-be purchaser has made up his own mind). Most issues also contain a review-type article, though these are usually not particularly long and certainly not over-endowed with references. There is however a place for the briefer review article in a journal whose main function at the moment is to offer a place for clinically based scientific papers.

What does *Journal of Hepatology* not



offer? There is no editorial comment on the papers that are accepted — which is reasonable — but neither is there a section for comments by readers on papers that have been published. This is a deficiency that needs to be corrected.

Though youthful, the journal does seem to be filling a need in that it is attracting and publishing quickly a variety of investigative and clinical papers on hepatology. It perhaps needs to find a particular direction — such as viral hepatitis — if it is to attract quality papers away from other general and gastroenterology journals. It should also allow for comments from outside about papers to be published, and it needs to be cheaper if it is to appeal to medical librarians. Presumably, though, EASL is its captive audience? □

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