adrenergic nerve activity was brought about by release peripherally from the post-ganglionic fibre of acetylcholine which in turn releases noradrenaline from a peripheral store. The authors conclude, however, that in man it has not been possible so far to demonstrate such a cholinergic link in the sympathetic pathways to blood vessels in a human limb. Other sections deal with the response of blood vessels to drugs and to local temperature changes, and with physical problems posed by the circulation. Only a single section is devoted to veins, and this describes various factors which affect ‘venous tone’, that is, the resistance of the veins and other capacity vessels to distention. Reflex adjustment of ‘venous tone’ constantly occurs in normal man and is concerned in maintaining venous return.

Circulatory reflexes may be blocked by neurological conditions involving brain-stem, spinal cord, or peripheral nerves. When they are lost quite small changes in posture or blood volume and administration of drugs in therapeutic doses may cause severe hypotension. This issue of the Bulletin provides a valuable synopsis of its subject in readable form, and can be consulted with profit by any neurologist who wishes to improve his understanding of circulatory changes in his patients.


Since 1900 the Year Books have provided doctors in various fields of medicine with annual selections from the published literature which seem to their distinguished editors to reflect the progress of their speciality. There must be few clinicians accustomed to using a medical library who have not found these volumes useful. The note following the table of contents on page 3 is ambiguous; the word ‘publication’ might be mistakenly taken to refer to the original contribution and not to the current Year Book. The older explanatory note, altered two years ago, was quite clear and should be reintroduced. No two editors would make the same selection but few readers would claim that they had read the majority of the papers in their own particular sections. The abstracts are long enough to present the ‘meat’ of the original publication and editorial comments are sometimes added. It is revealing to read an abstract of a publication which originally impressed one but which apparently found itself no resting place in the ‘little nowhere of the brain’. In this sense the abstract certainly gives the memory an annual jog.

The table of contents of each section—neurology, psychiatry, and neurosurgery—together with the subject and author indexes, help the casual reader and at the same time make it easier for the clinician to look up the year’s contribution to his own pet subjects. Both types of reader may find they can enlarge their vocabulary (aliquorhoea; citrullinuria; homocystes) and (if they care to) their personal collection of eponymous data (Fazio-Londe disease, McArde-Schmid-Pearson disease, Hoover’s sign, Powassan virus). Aspirants to the Membership who want a little practice in the ‘multiple-choice stakes’ may like to try their hand at the ‘Year Book quiz’ which ‘thousands of physicians look forward to each year’!

Some of the publications seem scarcely to have earned their reward of being included in the year’s contributions. One such, for example, refers to a paper on four cases of peripheral neuritis following influenza—scarcely an example of ‘the working essence of the cream of recent international medico-scientific literature’ which the publishers claim for these volumes. Apparently there is no cream to be found in Brain these days. Not since 1958 have the three editors found anything from that venerable journal worth abstracting for their readers. Yet in the current neurological section there were 19 papers from Neurology, 15 from the Archives of Neurology, and 10 from the pages of the journal in which this review appears. Curious?

Compliments to the photographer who made such subtle contributions to the evidence in the case of transvestism (p. 379) before and after hormonal and surgical treatment!

J. D. SPILLANE


This American textbook of neurology was warmly welcomed in the British medical press when it was published in 1955. It provided an acceptable, straightforward account of modern neurological teaching and practice in North America and reflected the author’s considerable experience in Boston and New York. A second edition was called for in 1959 and after two further reprints we have a third edition.

New information about the neurological complications of a number of different diseases has been included and the revised chapter on cerebrovascular disorders now provides an up-to-date and sober account of this difficult subject. The tables have always been a useful and original feature of the book but there are a few which are of questionable value. Table 33, for example, showing the incidence of symptoms immediately prior to attacks of cerebral haemorrhage, thrombosis, and embolism, are based on data published in 1937. In Table 52 are outlined the duration of symptoms before the patients’ admission to hospital in the various types of intracranial tumour—as experienced in 1936.

As the author has intentionally omitted the traditional sections on anatomy and examination of the nervous system, the student would probably be helped if more clinical illustrations were provided and if the index were improved. If he wished to learn, for example, the causes of ‘cramp’ or ‘stupor’, the manifestations of ‘parietal’ lobe disorder or ‘hydatid’ disease, the significance of ‘colloidal gold curve’ alterations in the spinal fluid, or ‘pyruvate’ abnormalities the index would not help him. Platybasia is still (p. 424) wrongly considered to be synonymous with basilar impression. In the same section, on the Arnold-Chiari malformation, the important and long-neglected and classic paper by Chiari in 1891 is still to be rediscovered.
Judging by the references at the end of the account of polyneuritis of pregnancy (p. 644) this condition may be disappearing in America as it is in this country; all four references are 30 years old. Diabetic polyneuritis (p. 645) continues to be attributed to inadequate control of diabetes despite much evidence to the contrary. The slight reference (nine lines) to the carpal tunnel syndrome (p. 393) must still puzzle neurologists who believe it to be one of the commonest forms of 'neuritis' in the adult female. It is not mentioned in the differential diagnosis of the less common syndrome of cervical rib which takes up three pages.

Successful as this textbook of neurology has obviously been, it is, like many textbooks, more a source of information than a practical guide to the student and practitioner.

J. D. SPILLANE


This is an important book, written in English. The title might suggest that it is of little interest to neurologists. In fact it is a most valuable work of reference on all aspects of transmission at the neuromuscular junction and other cholinergic synapses. The aim of the volume is 'to provide a ready inclusive source of established information, in defining areas where further studies are indicated, and in preventing unnecessary duplication of past work', and this is admirably achieved. The 24 chapters by an international team of experts are grouped into four sections: 1 Components of cholinergic systems, 2 chemical classification and biochemical reactions of the anticholinesterase agents, 3 systematic pharmacology, and 4 toxicology and therapeutic applications of the anticholinesterase agents.

The themes are treated in a systematic manner which makes it easy to find the information required despite the very detailed presentation. The medical writer who can rarely find space to present his full evidence may be impatient of the detail essential to the chemist. Perhaps 'the medical literature' would be less overwhelmed with the evanescent if details rather than opinions had to be presented for scrutiny and references were less limited. This book does both and does not confine its viewpoint to man, or even to the mammal. Where there is a major controversy both arguments are presented. Nachmansohn fully restates his reasons for assigning to acetacholine a role in the conduction of the nerve impulse. The opposing view, at present held by the majority, is presented more briefly but effectively.

Duplication is inevitable in a work of this nature but it is not excessive and is confined to what is necessary to make each chapter a self-sufficient essay. Cross-references are good and the index is adequate. The book is well produced, misprints are few, and conventions of nomenclature are consistent throughout (though chemists and clinicians might not agree on the spelling of ammonium). Grob gives an excellent account of his views on the nature and treatment of myasthenia gravis. The reviewer is less enthusiastic about the value of oximes in the treatment of neostigmine intoxication.

Neurologists will hope to have this excellent book available in a reference library but toxicologists and workers in pest control or chemical warfare will want to own the book for frequent use. Its considerable price represents good value in view of its size, equivalent to three or four normal monographs.


Professor Feldberg's original and fruitful studies of the pharmacological effects of agents perfused through the ventricular system of the cat are now widely known. This little volume introduces this work to the non-specialist clinician who will be not only interested in its potential clinical applications, but also intrigued by the apparent simplicity of the ingenious procedures which are described. The local application of chemical agents to the structures of the central nervous system may, if work such as the present is properly followed up, become a commonplace in neurological therapeutics.


The epidemics of poliomyelitis during the last 20 years that preceded the introduction of vaccination stimulated research into the pathogenesis of paralysis and deformity in poliomyelitis and produced some important changes in methods of management. Now that currents of thought have steadied towards common methods of management in most centres in the world, it is appropriate that a book should be produced that summarizes what has been learned and what can now be accepted as correct and useful in modern treatment of the disease. Although the fluency of the writing may be open to criticism, the authors have done well to compress so much useful information into so short a space.

Chapters on neuronal injury and muscle recovery summarize adequately the findings of research in these subjects in recent years. The brief chapter on deformity, however, is rather confusing. Subsequent chapters on the management of the recovery period are based on the author's own experience. Some good illustrations of simple and inexpensive apparatus could be particularly useful to anyone faced with an epidemic of poliomyelitis but with inadequate primary facilities for treatment.

Any book on poliomyelitis has to meet the challenge of describing treatment for the condition that may result in paralysis of any degree in any part of the body. Too often, the result is either a generalization of no practical value or a welter of practical details based on no particular principles. The authors have tried to steer a course between these two extremes and it is to their credit that they have done so reasonably successfully.


The restoration of vision to one who has been blind from
Book reviews

J. D. Spillane

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