ease through the neuropathies culminating in matters metaphysical. An intriguing chapter on dementia and religion includes spiritual references from St John Climacus as well as from the Corinthians and St Luke; to a visiting Martian, this might give the misleading impression that dementia is restricted to readers of the New Testament. While a text of this kind can provide no more than a superficial appraisal of a refractory group of maladies, the text is concise and convenient for those who would wish to enjoy a summary of current interests in this area of gerontology and geriatric medicine.

GEORGE STERN


The book is divided into four sections which cover neurotransmitters and neuromodulators, aspects of neuronal function and development, glial function and clinical applications. It has been presented by the editors as an introduction to the application of recombinant DNA technology to neurology. There have been several remarkable advances to date which have shown the effectiveness of such an approach, as for example, in Huntington's chorea. These advances have been based on basic studies such as those exemplified in the book, which is a collection of selected articles, mostly from the USA. These articles by various contributors provide some insight into the way in which fundamental problems are approached by basic scientists. Invariably in such an approach there will be different levels of success and rates of progress reported, leading to variable quality. Generally, no new information is presented that cannot be garnered from the specialist literature. Rather the articles represent research reports, albeit of a specialised nature, in which topics of molecular biological interest are presented somewhat to the exclusion of other more cellular studies. This selectivity may result from efforts to present a concise, molecular biological viewpoint.

Since this book is designed to appeal to clinicians as well as basic scientists, there are several chapters of direct interest to clinicians in the last section. This includes a descriptive analysis of the use of DNA probes and also presents techniques for obtaining RNA in a viable form from human material. However, the reader would gain more from reading the earlier sections which contain information primarily on structural analysis of genes coding for specific brain elements, as for example in the chapters describing a human myelin basic protein variant and the relationship between tyrosine hydroxylase and homologous sequences. A wide variety of macromolecules are covered ranging from receptors to neuron-specific enzymes. Other chapters include the functional and developmental aspects of these macromolecules as well as the neuronal expression of the protoocogenes c-src, which is possibly involved in differentiation processes.

The book is perhaps too specialised and detailed to be viewed as an appropriate introduction for clinicians without prior exposure to molecular biology. It assumes that the reader is at least cognisant of the terminology and concepts. Those in the field will find this book a valuable source of information on developments and clinicians may also appreciate the chapters of more immediate relevance to their specialty. To satisfy basic and clinical researchers is not an easy task and a middle path has to be found which ensures the retention of interest of both parties. This is a useful book to have but one of its drawbacks is that there is considerable redundancy, particularly with regard to strategy. The book should be regarded more as a collection of related articles than as a text in which the contributors present a review of their research interests. It would have been helpful to have included a more extensive overview which also addressed the future direction of the application of molecular techniques.

PAUL SMITH AND CHRISTINE HALL


This text now into its third edition has clearly been popular with medical students for many years. Would I recommend it as essential reading material for the busy undergraduate of today? I am afraid I would not and the reason would be very largely that I consider 700 + pages far too long to be considered as essential reading for a subject to which most medical schools devote only two or three weeks.

The book is divided into four sections, the first two dealing with neurological assessment, examination and localisation and the last two sections devoted to clinical neurology. Section one is devoted to neurological history and examination. It is clearly laid out and supplemented extensively with photographs. The neurological assessment and examination of children and neonates is deliberately brief. This is entirely reasonable as the neurological examination of children, neonates and development assessment is an art of its own and one I suggest most adult neurologists have not acquired. Section two summarises the major symptoms and signs produced by pathology in the nervous system. This is well done and never confuses the reader with too detailed neuroanatomy. The last two sections deal with clinical neurology. The first of these


A selection of 163 papers out of more than 500 that were presented at the 16th International Epilepsy Congress held in 1985 are contained in this book. However, it is more than a simple collection of separate articles, and the editors are to be congratulated on their organisation of the text. The book is divided into 14 sections that deal with different aspects of epilepsy. These include neuropathology, the electrogensis of seizures, diagnostic techniques, surgical treatment, anticonvulsant therapy, genetics, psychiatry, drug help groups, and biodynamic.

Much previously unpublished work is included. Several studies are reported on controversial topics such as anticonvulsant drug withdrawal. This allows the reader to readily compare the different approaches to the same problem, and make his own assessment of their merits. However, there is no editorial comment or reference to discussions held at the meeting.

The book provides an overview of current progress and research techniques in this broad field, but does not aim to give comprehensive reviews. People working in epilepsy, whatever their particular interest, should find it helpful. Access to it would be particularly important for those involved in research.

D FISHER

Book reviews
Molecular Biology in Basic and Clinical Neuroscience Research

Paul Smith and Christine Hall

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