

is also a lack of uniformity in the way the references are organised, some being presented in the old and much more useful alphabetical order and others are listed under the order in which they are quoted, a regrettable modern practice. The chapters are clearly written though not free from typographical errors and malapropisms (if such can be said to exist in an era of descriptive lexicography) and the reader may suffer from excessive exposure to acronyms. Even spinal cord injury is dealt with in this way.

Generally the book can be recommended as a reference text for departments and individuals.

TT KING

Bailliere's clinical neurology. International Practice and Research. (Vol. 1/No. 1 April 1992—Neurological Aspects of Human Retroviruses). Guest Editor: P RUDGE (Pp 262; Price: £27.50). 1992. London, Bailliere Tindall. ISBN 0-7020-1629-2.

This multiple author book aims to summarise what is known about retroviral involvement of the nervous system in man. The first two chapters consist of a comprehensive but rather indigestible discourse on the classification, molecular biology and immunology of the known retroviral diseases. There is a further chapter on retroviral diseases in animals. I felt that for a book aimed at a clinical audience these were rather too long and could have been condensed.

An excellent chapter, describing the neurological syndromes associated with human T cell leukaemia virus infection, follows. The remainder of the book is devoted to human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection, beginning with a useful brief overview of the associated disease spectrum. Chapters on opportunistic infections, cognitive impairment and other neurological disorders associated with HIV infection come next. Finally there is a section on pathology and a review of overall management.

It is interesting to see a European book on this subject. Although HIV infection produces broadly similar features in all Western cultures there are clearly subtle differences on this side of the Atlantic, for example in the relative frequencies of the different opportunistic infections. There is a certain amount of repetition in some of the early chapters but overall I found this a good book that achieves its aims. It would be a useful addition to any departmental library.

TJ WALLS

London Neurogenetics Database. Oxford Medical Databases. By M BARAITSER and R M WINTER (Price: £395.00). Oxford University Press. 1991. ISBN 0-19-262-039-8

Many Doctors are faced with the necessity of counselling patients or their relatives concerning hereditary disease. To do this requires confidence and detailed information. This electronic information resource provides both.

The greater part of it is a table of recognised neurogenetic syndromes (about a thousand), with synonyms. This table can be browsed either by name (e.g., "Which syndromes contain the word CLEFT in their name?") or, more usefully, by clinical features. By trial, and with selection of features by their significance, it is possible to establish a list of syndromes that match a clinical picture, of a manageable size. To do this task by hand would be possible: it is in principle little different from selecting a particular bundle of groceries from a supermarket. It is beyond this point that the value of the electronic technique is seen, because, effortlessly, the database can display further information about the selected syndromes. It will provide an abstract of each syndrome and references to the original papers. This is the information that is needed to prune the list of syndromes individually to those few which are the possible diagnoses in a particular case. The database also allows searching of the reference list alone and this is in itself a valuable resource because there are just over ten thousand references. There is a facility to file data referring to patients in a third database (which can be stored off the computer). This is particularly useful in those situations when a diagnosis cannot be reached initially, and one needs to allow time to elapse as a diagnostic test—either to allow the significance of particular features to become apparent or because important features are age-related.

There are other methods such as working from the genetic defect where known. Whilst no one would claim to be pan-optic, there is a good case for feeling that if a tool like this does not turn up a recognised hereditary cause for a syndrome (however genetic it may look) then there is no such cause. The user's guide warns that this is a system for experts rather than an expert system as such. This database has many strengths: the instructions on how to install it give the correct information on hardware and software requirements, though finding the 12 MByte of disk space required to run it might be difficult. The instructions are easy to follow. The database is small enough to fit on a reasonable number of floppy disks rather than a CD-ROM. Updates and supplements are planned.

The techniques and procedures needed to operate the database are clearly described in the well-produced manual, and easy to master. There are some points that the prospective user should be aware of. It is plainly intended for the practising clinician and will be of far greater use in the consulting room than in the library. It is strongly slanted towards paediatric practice. Apart from the database's being the product of many years' work from one unit, its organisation represents a fairly individualistic way of going about things. Not many Doctors would wish to keep patient records (even in abstracted form) on a computer.

The overall value of the data is outstanding, and the high quality of the software and presentation (such as the user's guide and manuals) is what one would expect from a major publishing house. There is a commitment to extending this work, and keeping it up-to-date. The main audience for this database is self-defining, but it is to be hoped that many neurologically-inclined Doctors will look at it, as it replaces many paper-based resources and, therefore, makes available information otherwise inaccessible due to constraints of time.

BP FOWLER

Treatment of Multiple Sclerosis Trial Design, Results and Future Perspectives. Edited by: R A RUDICK and D E GOODKIN (Pp 313; Price: DM 210.00). 1992. Heidelberg, Springer-Verlag. ISBN 3-540-19683-8

This book bears testimony to the difficulties of assessing treatment in such a variable disease over the years by devoting almost half its content to an exhaustive and masterly review of the methodology, and its pitfalls. This section is thus more suited to those who might design future trial protocols than to the clinician who dips into its pages for an update on current treatment options. Indeed the main title may mislead—this is not a comprehensive text of treatment in MS but rather a critical appraisal of attempts to alter or slow the progression of the disease, focussing on specific immunotherapies. Nevertheless at a time of rapid expansion in immunology a book with such a perspective is timely. Many Neurologists without immunological expertise will welcome this comprehensive critique of immunotherapy in this common condition.

The second half of the book relates to specific forms of immunotherapy and comprises comprehensive reviews of treatment data to date often enhanced by the authors' personal experience of their 'pet treatment'. Other chapters are presented in the format of an extended paper which is perhaps less objective. The chapters on Natural History (Goodkin) and Steroid Treatment (Myers) were particularly enjoyable.

The final two chapters provide an enticing insight into future therapy, aimed at more specific (but as yet hypothetical) methods of immune intervention. If these aspirations are realised, the meat of the current text may become relegated to the earlier historical chapters. This book will earn its place on the shelf of those who wish to embark on the thorny road of evaluating modern treatments of MS rather than the general clinician.

DA FRANCIS

SHORT NOTICE

Functional Anatomy of the Neuroendocrine Hypothalamus (Ciba Foundation Symposium 168). Edited by D J CHADWICK (ORGANISER) AND J MARSH (Pp 300; Price £42.50). 1992. Chichester, J Wiley & Sons Ltd. ISBN 0-471-93440-2.

Clinical Neuroanatomy for Medical Students 3rd Edition. By R S SNELL (Pp 653 Illus: Micrographs, some colour; Price £24.95). 1992. Edinburgh, Churchill Livingstone. ISBN 0-316-80244-1.

Management of Acute Pain: A Practical Guide. Prepared and Edited by International Association for the Study of Pain (*Task Force on Acute Pain*) Edited by L B READY and W T EDWARDS (Pp 73; Price US \$15.00) 1992 Seattle, IASP Publications. ISBN 0-931092-01-9.



BOOK REVIEWS: Treatment of Multiple Sclerosis Trial Design, Results and Future Perspectives.

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