
The authors hope that the reader of this book "will be continually reminded of the mind/body interaction involved in pain states." They have succeeded in their task reasonably well but in a book of this size many important features of pain can be mentioned only in passing. The contraints of size make this inevitable. The various chapters give a brief account of present attitudes to pain and pain relief from authors with up-to-date knowledge of their subject. Each of them could have expanded his chapter into a much longer monograph with good effect and perhaps will do so in the future. In the present volume discussion on the problems of, precepts for, and suggestions on, actual treatment are limited. The style of the book is set by the first chapter—a joint effort by four authors who point out that the anomalies which exist between clinicians' observations of patients in pain and the findings of research workers into pain represents an important scientific problem. They emphasise differences between acute and chronic pain, and propose that pain is a central perception and not a sensation. This is not new and stems perhaps from research into pain pathways and transmission mostly being carried out on animal "models" with relatively little being done in the human being except in the psychology and psychiatry of pain. Hence this book, which attempts to interpret this material into clinical use.

The second chapter is a rather mechanical account of opioid neuropeptides and again this may be due to there being four joint authors. Chapter three runs through some of the radiological processes available to resolve the origins of spinal pain and its author was very constrained by space since for instance one page for "failure of disc surgery" plus "the failed back surgery syndrome" seem inadequate. I feel it should have been either expanded or left out. Chapters four and seven by Professor Merskey are delightful. Chapter four, only four pages long including references, is on "The nature of pain" and re-emphasises that pain is an experience and is what the patient says it is. Chapter seven "The psychological and psychiatric aspect of pain control" is a "gem" full of common sense and needs to be read a number of times to get full value as it is very succinct. Chapters five and six on "assessment of pain" and "clinical pharmacology of pain" fit very well between Professor Merskey's chapters and re-emphasise the importance of these two subjects. The sentence "the role of precise diagnosis cannot be overstated" shows the clinical orientation of the authors and could well be printed at intervals throughout this and many other books on pain relief. Chapter eight on "predicting surgical outcome" is really a short preliminary paper while chapters eight and nine respectively on "Child pain" and "Pain and the aged patient" are extremely valuable. It is good to see a chapter on controlling child pain as it seems agreed by many clinicians that the young child does not feel pain very much. The chapter points out that while paediatric pain is present and is real, it is dealt with differently from adult pain and goes on to discuss why this should be so. Most books on pain and pain relief adopt a stance towards giving drugs, or nerve blocking methods, or psychological methods, or a mixture of these. This is one of the few books which tries to give something more than a purely psychological approach. It does not succeed entirely but it sets out to provide a more global understanding of pain and the patient with pain and goes some of the way to do this. At its price it is good value especially for the practitioner or student who wants a synopsis to bring them up to date on modern thought on the meaning and management of pain, particularly from the psychological aspect. It will be a useful addition to the residents library.

S LIPTON


I approached this book with disfavour and prejudice. A "Review of Neuroscience" weighing only 1.3 kg and in 622 pages indeed! Prejudice hardened when reading in the preface that the book was written for "the medical student, dental student, physician, surgeon, physical therapist, nurse and others," On closer acquaintance the book becomes a sheer delight and an object lesson to those of us who are not very good at extracting the essential points from complex matters. The book should have had a less ambitious title ("? "Summary" ? "Overview") and should have been dedicated simply to anyone who wants an up-to-date summary of the fundamentals of neuroscience and who especially needs visual representation of the subject matter.

Neuro-anatomy (developmental, gross and microscopic), neurophysiology, neurology (malformations, degenerative disease, infections and much else) neurosurgery—all are summarised in a masterly fashion without superfluity of words and without, as far as I could determine, any errors of fact. On every right-hand page are illustrations (unnumbered but probably totalling over 2000) which are usually beautiful line drawings mostly by Professor Pansky who clearly has inherited this skill from an older school of anatomists. In addition there are photographs of brain slices, histological sections, scanning EM photographs together with computed tomography scans.

For nurses working with patients having neurological and neurosurgical disorders, and for medical students this book will be extremely welcome. Even those who have tucked themselves away in some remote corner of the world of neuroscience may welcome the opportunity to browse.

KENNETH TILL


Thomas Willis was appointed Sedleian Professor of Natural Philosophy at Oxford in 1660 at the age of 39 years. He put together a series of some 34 lectures over the next three years. Most were worded in Latin handwriting by John Locke, whose notebooks form our major source of this material. Others were worded by Richard Lower. As Kenneth Dewhurst points out in his introduction, "Any series of seventeenth-century medical lectures would have some historical interest, but here we are concerned with those of Thomas Willis who laid down the foundations of neurology in Restoration Oxford." Dewhurst has produced a volume to delight...