
This book contains contributions from the fifth International Congress on Neuromuscular Diseases held in Marseilles in September, 1982. There are in excess of two hundred authors for the hundred or so brief chapters and, not surprisingly, quality is somewhat uneven. Nevertheless, a high proportion of the world's acknowledged authorities have contributed a chapter, although the peripheral nerve seems to be somewhat under-represented.

The first part is divided into sections dealing with genetic expression in skeletal muscle, prevention of Duchenne dystrophy, fuels in normal and diseased muscle, metabolic congenital myopathies, the biochemistry of Duchenne dystrophy, mechanisms of muscle cell necrosis/regeneration and a section on membranes in muscle disease. The second part is devoted to the biochemistry and cell membrane functions of peripheral nerves, repair and regeneration and the assessment of sensory function; this part finishes with a, slightly out of place, five chapter section on motor neuron disease. Subsequently, there is a series of chapters on the neuromuscular junction, acetylcholinesterase and myasthenia gravis, and finally a major section on therapy and rehabilitation. In this latter section there are some particularly interesting contributions on the management of scoliosis in neuromuscular disease, the therapeutic trial and the effects of exercise.

This book is relatively up-to-date and the references are extensive. The interested reader can briefly survey current growth areas, especially in the sphere of diseases of muscle and the neuromuscular junction. It is not in any sense a text book of neuromuscular disease, however. The presentation and reproduction of illustrations are of high quality and the index adequate. This is a good book for the specialist library.

WA TAYLOR


Subtitled “A practical approach” this book certainly represents a more manageable size and reasonable price than some larger volumes on the same subject. It opens with an algorithm for diagnosis of peripheral neuropathy which is complex and yet not complex enough to cover all the options, as the rest of the book reveals. Individual chapters by leading authorities provide clear accounts of individuals subjects such as diabetic, toxic and genetically determined neuropathies. The opportunity is taken to review the neuropathies associated with paraproteinaemias, a recently recognised group which is beginning to teach us important lessons about myelin and axonal antigens. The most interesting group so far has been those patients with an IgM paraprotein and a demyelinating neuropathy. The IgM paraprotein of many of these patients represents antibody probably directed against a recently recognised myelin protein, myelin associated glycoprotein, which may be important in axon Schwann cell interactions. Since this book was written Latov and colleagues, who have been at the forefront of this work, have also demonstrated the specificity of another IgM monoclonal for an axonal antigen, chondroitin sulphate C, in axonal neuropathy. The possibility exists that the neuropathies associated with paraproteins represent a family of neuropathies caused by antibodies to several different antigens. These antigens may turn out to be of interest in neurobiology. A Japanese account of a related syndrome of skin hyperpigmentation, oedema, polyneuropathy and plasma cell dyscrasia, added almost as an appendix, represents the most detailed review available of this curious condition. One hopes that the identification of a relevant antigen may elucidate the link between this bizarre collection of symptoms. Accounts of neuropathy encountered in India and Africa deal all too briefly with leprosy, although acknowledging that this represents the commonest form of peripheral neuropathy in both continents. This is because patients with leprosy are treated in special centres and rarely by neurologists. This is another symptom of the general rule whereby conditions which become treatable with the advance of medicine, like meningitis and subacute combined degeneration of the spinal cord, are stolen from the neurologists by internal medicine and other specialists. It is encouraging to see therefore, that this book gives space to the management of patients with acute generalised paralysis not ignoring nursing, physiotherapy and respiratory care. Every medical library, and many student and practising neurologists will want to have this clearly illustrated volume on their shelves.

RAC HUGHES


This volume produced by Springer-Verlag is in essence the proceedings of the 34th Annual Meeting of the German Neurosurgical Society held in Mannheim in 1983. There are 56 contributions, some of them 600 words or less; 33 appear to have been invited to speak on a topic, the rest are “free”. The subjects range from surgical management of metastatic brain tumours through the symptoms and signs suggestive of an intracranial metastasis to radiotherapy and chemotherapy for the problem. There are also quite a few articles