Book reviews


This book contains the Bertha Memorial Lecture and fifty-three papers selected for presentation at the 11th World Federation of Neurology Meeting held in Salzburg in September 1982. The papers are divided into five sections covering Regulation of Cerebral Blood Flow and Risk Factors, Neuroimaging Techniques, Critical Evaluation of Therapeutic Approaches, Cerebral Perfusion and Metabolism in Relation to Function, and Migraine.

In the Bertha Memorial Lecture Sokoloff outlines the principles behind the 2-deoxy-D-glucose method of studying glucose metabolism and illustrates the impressive results obtained by autoradiography in studying the close coupling between local functional activity and local glucose metabolism. For example, in the rat, the rates of glucose utilisation in the primary projection areas of the retina are directly proportional to the logarithm of the intensity of retinal illumination. The deoxy-glucose method can now be applied to man using positron emission tomography (PET) though the resolution is lower than that obtained by autoradiography. Using this method WD Heiss et al have shown reduced cerebral metabolism distant to the site of infarction and suggest that in part this is due to deafferentation. Other papers emphasise the ability of PET to demonstrate the dynamic changes in blood flow and regional metabolism occurring after acute infarction.

Nearly one fifth of the papers are concerned with the measurement of cerebral blood flow (CBF). The normal decline with age is enhanced in subjects with risk factors for cerebro-vascular disease and the “hyperfrontal” distribution declines with age and in patients with Parkinson’s disease. In rhesus monkeys autoregulation in the vertebral arterial system is less efficient than in the carotid system, which may be of beneficial effect in protecting against hypotension (M Tomita et al).

In the neuroimaging section it is perhaps surprising that there is only one paper on nuclear magnetic resonance imaging. Various digital subtraction angiography (DSA) and Doppler techniques in the study of carotid disease are discussed in three papers, but only in one are they compared with conventional angiography. DSA fails to identify lesions in a small proportion of cases, whereas Doppler studies tend to overestimate the presence of disease.

Whether aspirin is of benefit to patients who have sustained a TIA is still unclear. The French “AICLA” study provides evidence that aspirin may be of benefit in preventing re-infarction in patients with minor completed strokes. Other papers discuss circulating platelet aggregates in patients with vascular disease and others concentrate on the inhibition of platelet aggregation by low and high dose aspirin therapy and by other drugs.

Sjaastad et al provide an interesting review of chronic paroxysmal hemicrania and compare the autonomic disturbances that further identify it as a separate entity to cluster headache. The relationship between changes in CBF during a classical migraine attack and the spreading depression of Leao is discussed.

This book is worth browsing through, though the price is against adding it to ones own bookshelf. Although many of the papers are short and lacking in detail, and much of the data have been published elsewhere, in some cases since the conference, the wide range of topics covered is likely to include something of interest for all.

BRIAN KENDALL


This is a most important publication on head injuries; it contains the experience, results and conclusions of the Glasgow team presented as one might expect in an eminently logical and readable fashion. The title should be taken in its widest context as it covers more than medical in-patient treatment. The first chapters are devoted to epidemiology, pathology and patho-physiology; the text of these chapters is simple and comprehensive. The following chapters are concerned with the clinical investigation, assessment and treatment of head injured patients with particular reference to the Glasgow experience with international comparisons. These chapters are particularly eloquent and aspects of the “aggressive” treatment of head injuries such as intracranial pressure monitoring, ventilation, steroids and barbiturates are objectively discussed. The illustrations and diagrams are in black and white and, surely, the next edition will be improved by the introduction of fourth generation CT Scans and perhaps also NMR and PET images. Chapter 9 is concerned with the management of acute injuries and this should be compulsory...

D HILTON-JONES


This book is a translation of a work by a Dusseldorf orthopaedic surgeon. It sets out to provide a comprehensive account of disease of the intervertebral discs at all levels of the spine. It is beautifully produced and illustrated and contains much useful basic information, especially about the anatomy and physiology of the vertebral column and associated structures. Having said this, however, this reviewer must confess that he did not find this a satisfactory book. It is written in an awkward style that often requires several readings for one to be able to grasp the meaning of a passage. Whether this is a reflection of the German original text or is due to an inept translation is difficult to say. The use of a number of terms and concepts unfamiliar to the English-speaking reader does not make the task of following the text any easier. Furthermore this book lacks sufficient critical appraisal of the problems of diagnosis, assessment and management that are involved in a busy spinal practice. Much of the book is written in a rather dogmatic tone that is not really appropriate in a field where many accepted practices are not based on firmly established information and where their efficacy is to some extent dependent on a correct assessment of the personal circumstances of the individual patient. For instance there is no real discussion of the interaction between psychological factors and the physical symptoms of spinal degenerative disease. Even the discussion of such topics as the indications for exploring a lumbar disc protrusion, or the results of lumbar disc surgery, are simply not adequate either for the beginner in the field or for the experienced spinal specialist. Sadly this reviewer found this monograph disappointing and cannot recommend it, especially in view of its not inconsiderable price.

RS MAURICE-WILLIAMS