
Intradiscal enzyme therapy for lumbar disc disease has a controversial history over the past 20 years but chymopapain has recently been re-licensed in the USA so this is a timely review of both that history and the current status. As one would expect from Mark Brown this is a clearly written, comprehensive and balanced presentation of the present state of intradiscal therapy. Despite the author’s limited personal series of chymopapain he is one of the few surgeons who also has experience of using collagenase and this in fact frees him to provide an independent, unbiased view. As a convince user of chymopapain I approached this book feeling it would be of interest only to a few highly specialised practitioners but I finished it feeling that all doctors concerned with the management of low back disorders should be aware of its contents. I can only support Mark Brown’s conclusion that intradiscal therapy is now a proven dramatic breakthrough in the treatment of disc prolapse and this is the best presently available book to read.

GORDON WADDELL


This book is a response to the examinations used to test the suitability of candidates for membership of the Royal College of Psychiatrists and for higher training for consultant status in the NHS. It pitilessly reveals the inadequacy of the examinations in assessing professional competence in a field which is not purely technical and which requires the development of skill and judgement. Nevertheless, the hurdles have been set up, and the authors have set out to help the runners get over them. How well have they succeeded?

Possibly the most useful part of the book for the examinee will be Section Two—"Hints on taking psychiatric examinations." This section gives general advice on the various types of multiple choice question and how they must be tackled; on writing essays giving the old and sound advice—read the questions carefully and answer it and nothing else; on the clinical examination—what is expected and how it is done; and on the structure of and approach to the oral examination.

Then follow three large sections with many examples on multiple choice questions, case history questions, and essay questions. Of the three, the first is probably the most valuable as it demonstrates the ways in which Multiple Choice Questions may be constructed; the second contains some useful material; and the third shows why essay questions are so difficult to mark.

Many candidates will find this book useful in their revision; all three major sections cover the field broadly and bring together information which candidates will find helpful. As far as it goes the book is well done, but if this book accurately reflects the desired end-point of psychiatric training, it is an indictment of that procedure. How right the College has been to emphasise the importance of the process of training and of close supervision in clinical work; only in this context can books of this kind be seen in their proper place, in assisting the hapless candidate negotiate the course.

RHS MINDHAM


It has now become more generally accepted that volunteers have a role to play in the management of the aphasic patient. It is apparent that there is little information that is suitable for the interested lay person who wishes to know more about the speech and language disorders that follow strokes. Therefore, this book is timely and will be welcomed not only by volunteer organised but by speech therapists who work closely with volunteers. The style of the book has been carefully considered and would appeal to the least academic reader. It demonstrates how, with a little imagination and interest, one can expand and stimulate language activities with this grossly handicapped population. Furthermore, it would encourage even the most timorous volunteer to take a positive attitude and be confident with regard to what they can achieve.

The main reservation is that it does not give clear enough information about the nature of the speech and language disorders following stroke and their associated problems. It is regretted that the volunteer will have to look elsewhere for this information which would make the interpretation of the reactions of patients to different materials so much more meaningful. Additionally, the methods of selecting suitable materials for particular patients is covered too briefly.

The work of the authors is testimony to their sincerity and interest. It is unfortunate that the interaction between speech therapy and volunteers is not discussed more fully in the book. In fact, speech therapy is barely mentioned and it is felt that some lay people may not realise the role that professional help may have.

The authors are to be congratulated for offering such fresh, dynamic impetus in this area and one hopes that the next edition will expand on more of the technical aspects which will increase understanding and co-operation between the lay and professional careers in this field.

PM ENDERBY, R LANGTON HEWES