Book reviews


This American book provides a welcome change from the usual textbooks in which a description of neuro-anatomy followed by disorders of the various neurological systems. There are similarities with Practical Neurology by WB Matthews, which is a gem. Here, chapter headings are entitled, "Right-sided Weakness" and "Left Gaze Paresis", "Galactorrhea and Double Vision", "Sudden Difficulty Speaking". The approach is one of short clinical presentations of typical cases and a logical thinking-aloud of the thought process involved in reaching an anatomical diagnosis. The authors are to be congratulated on the simplicity of the text and the simple but adequate line drawings which are always on the page facing the relevant text. This makes it easy to assimilate the anatomical pathways. Many drawings were repeated several times in the book. They described the features which would lead one, for example, to conclude that the corticospinal tract was involved in a lesion, for example, brisk jerks and a positive Babinski sign, but as with many neurological texts, they do not adequately describe the various patterns of weakness typical of, in this case, a pyramidal lesion but in others a cortical lesion; or, in others, perhaps a root distribution. There are several unfortunate errors in the text, which should have been spotted in proof reading and may perhaps confuse the inexperienced reader. There are some left/right confusions as well, and a left homonymous field defect is clearly demonstrated when a right one should have been shown (p.127). The section on pharmacological tests on the pupils in Horner's syndrome is not a model of clarity. The anatomy, however, in relation to language disorders, lacunar syndromes, and the significance of doll's eye movements were particularly well covered. There were some inconsistencies in nomenclature, for example, Cheyne Stokes's respiration was defined in detail, yet words such as diencephalon, corona radiata and anisocoria were introduced without any explanation.

Although the authors decry the use of rote learning, it becomes clear that in cases involving the peripheral nervous system it would be impossible to work out the anatomy without the extensive innervation charts provided.

In general, I think this is a book that should be thoroughly recommended for medical students and I suspect it will find its way onto a lot of residents' and consultants' shelves. The frequent anatomical drawings are particularly valuable.

With a little attention to detail in the text, I would recommend this warmly and at £13.50 it represents a welcome change from the expensive text books that are usually presented.

RA JOHNSTON


This book is the published proceedings of the 1984 Meeting of the Congress of Neurological Surgeons of America, and comprises 660 pages divided into seven sections. The first section contains the presentations by Dr Rizzoli who was the honoured guest and he gives a fascinating and first-hand account of Dr Walter Dandy's contribution to neurosurgery. There is also an interesting chapter on "Dandy's brain team" and the life of a neurological resident at that time.

There are sections on cerebro-vascular surgery, cerebello-pontine angle tumours, trigeminal neuralgia, pineal tumours, orbital tumours and hydrocephalus. Most of the chapters have a strong clinical bias and are generally well-written and adequately illustrated. There is a very good chapter on cerebral arterial spasm which, for me at any rate, encapsulates the scientific knowledge to date behind this serious neurological problem, especially for those without a detailed background in the intricate biochemical involved in cerebral artery spasm.

In each of the remaining sections there are some very good chapters on practical problems such as trigeminal neuralgia recurring after treatment and adjacent chapters on different ways to manage tumours of the pineal region. The section on orbital tumours gives an over-view of this corner of neurosurgery and the last four chapters in the hydrocephalus section address in a pragmatic way the recurring problems concerning hydrocephalus.

I have found this series of books to be of great value, as they represent a form of recently updated neurosurgical textbook. This volume is no exception and if it is picked up by any neurosurgeon in training, I suspect he would feel a strong compulsion to read it from cover to cover. More experienced neurosurgeons may not agree with everything that is said, but will find the other chap's point of view put forward forcefully and in a clear manner.

JB FOSTER


The work is a record of one of the UCLA Symposium on Molecular and Cellular Biology which were established in 1972, to provide an interdisciplinary forum for scientists involved in new developments in biological research. The present volume presents new developments in the molecular biological approach to understanding neural function and development.

The book contains a series of detailed papers dealing with cytoskeletal archi-