This book, although stated on the cover to have been edited by Kelly, Kyle and Latov, is actually written by these three individuals, all of whom have been actively involved in the recent advances in this area. They are therefore in a position to write with authority. After discussing definitions and the epidemiology of plasma cell dyscrasias and associated neuropathies, the authors survey the relevant biochemistry and immunology of peripheral nerve. They then review current knowledge concerning neuropathy associated with Waldenström's macroglobulinaemia, benign monoclonal IgM paraproteinaemias and monoclonal IgM cryoglobulinaemia. Those neuropathies related to monoclonal paraproteins with activity against myelin-associated glycoprotein (MAG) are of particular importance, the occurrence of tremor and ataxia being a prominent clinical feature. Other intriguing variants are emerging such as monoclonal IgM paraproteins with activity against an epitope shared by GM, and GD1b gangliosides; these are associated with a multifocal motor neuropathy. Another is an IgM paraprotein with activity against chondroitin sulphate, characterised clinically by the occurrence of an axonal sensorimotor polyneuropathy and epidermolysis. Neuropathies associated with IgG and IgA monoclonal paraproteins are separated off from those accompanying IgM paraproteins and are considered to be similar to chronic inflammatory demyelinating polyneuropathy, a view that requires validation.

Neuropathy accompanying myeloma has been recognised for a substantially longer period and probably has a variety of mechanisms, including the intraneural deposition of amyloid. Osteoclastemic myeloma is given a separate chapter in view of the particular association between neuropathy and this rare form of myeloma. It is pointed out that the POEMS (polyneuropathy, organomegaly, oedema, M band, skin changes) syndrome, although identified by an eye-catching acronym, may be present in an incomplete form in association with this type of myeloma. The syndrome can also be associated with nonmalignant IgG and IgA paraproteinaemia. Neuropathy related to amyloid of immunological origin (AL amyloid) comprises the final condition that is considered. The discussion of the hereditary amyloid neuropathies, brought up in the differential diagnosis, is not very contemporary.

Throughout these chapters, a description of the clinical features, with illustrative case histories, is followed by accounts of the findings on investigation, the underlying pathology and what is known about pathogenesis, and treatment. The pathogenesis of these neuropathies is still largely obscure. There is some evidence that IgM paraproteins active against MAG directly lead to demyelination, but the reason for amyloid deposition in nerve and the mechanism of nerve fibre damage is uncertain.

This short monograph is timely. It embodies much new information that at present is largely available only in research publications in journals. Although it will be of particular interest to neurologists, it should also provide a useful survey for haematologists, oncologists and general physicians.

PK THOMAS


The author of this book has spent his life investigating the retina. Initially a biochemist with Wald at Harvard, he then progressed to investigate the anatomy and physiology of the retina. Finally as a Professor of Biology he has devoted recent years to the pharmacology of the retina with particular interest in the neurotransmitters.

This book therefore commences with a review of the retina as an approachable part of the brain. This is followed by a review of the cellular structure and synaptic organisation of the retina. The major part of this book is on the neuronal responses and synaptic mechanisms. The retina is particularly well suited for the study of intracellular recording and thus provides a strong spring board from which to launch our understanding of neuronal function in the brain.

The study of neurotransmitters has also shown how complicated they have become, and there are at least 15 neurotransmitters or neuromodulators detected so far in the retina.

The final chapters relate to electrical activity in the retina, photo receptor mechanisms and a final chapter relates the relevance of work on the retina to our understanding of brain mechanisms.

This book is well written, readable and in 250 pages provides an expert’s review of the exciting times the researcher in visual work has had over the past three decades. The future appears equally exciting.

MD SANDERS