**Book reviews**


The anomaly of stroke management in most British institutions is that patients are looked after by non-neurologists, the same is true in some other countries. This book is intended for those doctors who have to care for stroke patients. It is not intended for the expert on cerebrovascular disease.

The whole topic is well covered by two neurologists with a wide clinical experience of the subject. They provide a very down-to-earth, sensible approach without any important idiosyncrasies. By reading this work, the tyro will glean considerable knowledge and wisdom about stroke illness; for example when discussing the place of cardiac investigations, they say that “the question is not whether to look at the heart, but how thoroughly”. The text is punctuated in places by case reports, most of them very helpful and relevant, but a few were not. Their CT scans and PET scans are drawings rather than photographs, presumably to cut costs. This may irritate some readers.

The section on rehabilitation is rather short, which is consistent with the interest in the subject among most physicians! They rightly discuss the emotional danger of an exaggerated emphasis on physical therapy where patients are encouraged to strive for the return of normal function when it would be more appropriate to adapt to their deficit.

The references are well chosen, up-to-date and readily accessible. This will prove to be most useful to the non-specialist.


Despite its cumbersome title this book is both readable and enjoyable. For the reader without specialised knowledge, the ideas are presented clearly and vigorously and the most controversial interpretations seem to be models of logic. One can easily settle back and read through this book consecutively, buoyed up by Geschwind’s enthusiasm.

One may too readily accept conventional practices and beliefs, particularly in the partially charted field of behavioural psychology; right-handedness for writing has been equated with left hemisphere dominance. Geschwind, with his meticulous nature and his precisely recorded examination of the nervous system showed that accepted beliefs were too simplistic and tended to defeat any progress in our understanding of higher cerebral function and lateralisation. Having discarded unproven assumptions he showed that one hemisphere had a major role for some activities, while the other hemisphere was of preeminence for different functions. Dominance became a discredited term.

Geschwind had a magpie-like acquisitiveness for esoteric detail and these are woven into the texture of his book. Equally there are generous tributes to the assistance given by his friends and colleagues. Thirty years ago Geschwind drew attention to the asymmetry of the structure of the two hemispheres and here he discusses the various factors, genetic, hormonal and chemical which may influence this development. He then relates anomalies of the normal asymmetric development of the brain to various disorders of cerebral functions such as dyslexia. He associates left-handedness with certain immune disorders and predisposition to particular illnesses in later life. Furthermore, left-handedness which is generally regarded as a disability is shown to be associated with certain artistic and sporting talents.

This book is the work of an enthusiast; it glows with his infectious, headlong excitement, it bristles with provocative suggestions and is occasionally betrayed by its impetuosity.

It is a tribute to Dr Galaburda that two distinct hands are not easily identifiable in the presentation of this material.


This book on the pharmacology of cerebral ischaemia is a report of the proceedings of an international symposium held in the middle of 1986. It has therefore been published very rapidly and as such will be a reference book of interest to researchers in the field as the participants represented the main areas of scientific advance in the study of this subject. The book is interestingly produced in that there is a short initial section entitled Pathophysiology, which serves as a basic introduction to the main concepts which are treated in two further main sections entitled Methods and Pharmacology and Therapy, which represent overviews of research programmes and practical approaches to solving some of the problems posed in cerebral ischaemia. The final section entitled Poster Sessions represents a series of extended abstracts describing work in progress.

The speed of publication has meant that there have had to be compromises in editing. The book is produced in the well known camera ready format and clearly there is therefore little control over the standard of English, spelling and typographical errors. Though irritating, these do not detract from the messages of the book.

A certain degree of knowledge of the field will be required to read it critically and it is hardly suitable for the tyro. The referencing, particularly in the review chapters, is disappointingly partisan. Siejsio’s book Brain Energy Metabolism with its chapters on cerebral ischaemia is a much better introduction but the references are out of date. I think the book would be a useful addition to the library of laboratories in the field and for reference in specialised neuroscience institutes.


This is an account of the proceedings of a conference held in 1985 and encompasses the contribution of 29 authors in 21 chapters within 199 pages—a veritable model of succinctness for which the editors must be congratulated. Despite these constraints the diversity of topics is extraordinarily wide, embracing epidemiology, genetics, neurochemistry, neuropathology, and molecular biology and hierarchically ascends from the peripheral provinces of neuromuscular dis-

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