Book reviews


During the last decade the speed of development of the newer medical imaging techniques has been so rapid that it is difficult for authors to produce books that reflect the current "state of the art". Professors Valavanis, Schubiger and Naidich have gone a long way to overcome this problem with their Clinical Imaging of the Cerebello-Pontine Angle.

The early part of the book is devoted to a historical overview followed by sections on the technique for the evaluation of the cerebellopontine angle, the normal anatomy and that of adjacent structures. The frequency with which the small structures such as the anterior inferior cerebellar artery and the petrosal veins are visualised are expressed as percentages and this will be of great value to the examination candidate sitting M.C.Q. papers.

The major portion of the book is devoted to computer tomography appearances of acoustic neuroma, showing in detail the features on high resolution CT assisted by intravenuous enhancement for the large lesions with extension into the cerebellopontine cistern and gas CT cisternography for the mainly intrameatal tumour. "A gas-filled internal auditory canal, with well visualised neurovascular bundle and intracisternal portion of the seventh and eighth cranial nerves, safely excludes the presence of an acoustic neuroma", is sound advice, as is the following sentence "that non ffilling of the canal is not diagnostic of a mass within the canal".

Subsequent sections deal in turn with other types of lesion encountered in the cerebellopontine cistern and each condition is dealt with under four headings, General Consideration, Conventional Radiology, Computer Tomography, and Differential Diagnosis. Each section is clearly illustrated from the wealth of clinical material available to the authors.

The final twelve page section is devoted to magnetic resonance imaging. First the normal anatomy is discussed with the problems of visualisation of the neural bundle within the internal auditory canal unless surface coil high field partial saturation images are obtained. Many illustrations of acoustic neuroma are to be found in this section which also show the changes in the adjacent cerebellum in the larger tumours. The prediction that "High field strength surface coil MRI will replace gas cisternography" is probably true, but it will be many years before that prediction comes true in Britain.

The standard of the book is extremely high and the quality of the illustrations produced by the Photography Department of the University of Zurich greatly enhances the text. The bibliography containing 641 references, up to the year 1985, provide the reader with ample guidance for further material about the subject. The book has earned itself a place on the library shelves of neuroradiology, neurosurgery, neurology and otology departments where it will prove a valuable reference work. My only criticism is a purely personal one, that I would have liked to have found a larger section devoted to magnetic resonance imaging.

J V OCCLESHAW


This book records the Proceedings of the 2nd International rCBF Workshop held in Yugoslavia in 1986. The clinical and scientific importance of in vivo measures of brain function cannot be overemphasised, and this book aims to outline the nature, technique, and limitations of functional imaging, and to do so in relation to important clinical problems. It is a mixture of accounts of techniques, and accounts of clinical problems. Four chapters are directly concerned with the imaging of regional cerebral blood flow, particularly using the increasingly important single photon emission computed tomography, and one chapter deals with positron emission tomography. The remaining chapters deal with a variety of conditions from a clinical functional or methodological standpoint, but do so in widely different ways. For instance, the chapter on Alzheimer's disease gives a broad and very useful summary of imaging in general in the condition, while the paediatric chapter is concerned particularly with measures of cerebral blood flow. A book of conference proceedings is likely to be uneven in quality or style or coverage even with the most stringent of editing. There is undoubtedly variability in style and depth/breadth of coverage in this book but overall quality is very high. Nevertheless, because of the variability, the book suffers a little from a lack of focus, but not one which seriously distracts from its value. It will certainly be of interest to any neurologist or neurosurgeon, and the more biologically orientated psychiatrist and psychologist will find it of great value. Clinical physicists and neuroradiologists will perhaps find some of the information to be rather basic, but for trainees in these disciplines it would be extremely valuable. It is recommended.

NEIL BROOKS


This book is one of a series by the Foundation of Thanatology and is about death, disability and loss. These matters are never far from a neurosurgeon and this publication is written by a group of neurosurgeons, psychiatrists, radiological oncologists, nurses, social workers and a transplant coordinator. It covers the personal and professional experiences and reactions of these people when involved in dealing with severely disabled and dying patients and their relatives.

Among the major issues covered in the volume are Definitions of Death, Legal, Moral and Ethical Issues, Surgical, Medical, and Psychosocial Decision Making, Behaviour Roles and Relationships, Multidisciplinary Approaches to Care, Counselling, Disability, Loss, Suffering, and Rehabilitation, Education of Professionals, Grief and Bereavement, and Open Communication.

There are seven sections. The first of these is concerned with the neurosurgical aspects of care for patients suffering from brain tumour and myelomeningocoele. The chapters emphasise the relationship of the patient and his physician to disease and the involvement of the family in the support and care of the patient through what is often a dismal and difficult period of declining health and which in many cases leads to death.

The second section is about the important aspect of educating junior members of staff to their role in the caring team. All too fre-