Book reviews


Amidst the recent spate of trans-Atlantic books on the laser in neurosurgery it is refreshing to read this European publication which puts the laser in the context of other new neurosurgical techniques. Nevertheless, in an almost international gathering of authors there are major contributions from the USA in Stein’s accounts of the CUSA and the treatment of cerebral and spinal AVMs using pre-operative embolisation and non-laser microsurgery, Epstein’s presentation of the excision of spinal intramedullary tumours of childhood, using both the laser and ultrasound aspirator, Kelly’s computer-monitored CO2 laser stereotactic glioma excision, and the account by Laws and co-authors of the photodynamic therapy of brain tumours, all of which are quite comprehensive and valuable.

In addition there are extensive chapters on intraoperative monitoring with evoked potentials, and a number of sections concerned with stereotactic and interstitial radiotherapeutic techniques, embolisation of AVMs, and advanced stereotactic methods. The inclusion of chapters on neuro-stimulation devices, and long term drug delivery systems make this a comprehensive volume of value to all neurosurgeons who wish to be acquainted with modern techniques.

G BROCKLEHURST


Neuro-ophthalmology is a complicated discipline, involving aspects of a number of specialties, principally ophthalmology and neurology. It is difficult for residents in training in these specialties to grasp the subject, which can appear very fragmented and concerned only with minutiae. This excellent little book provides an admirable grounding in the subject. The aim has been to provide a broad overview, stressing the importance of the history and examination rather than specialised investigations in arriving at a diagnosis. There are 36 chapters. The first concentrates on the examination, beginning at a fairly basic level, and introducing and explaining the ophthalmological and neurological jargon, which so often bedevils communication between these specialties. There follow 19 chapters on the afferent visual system, 10 on the efferent, two on the eyelids, two on the pupils and one each on migraine and carotico cavernous fistula. Each chapter consists of the presentation of a case in some detail, followed by a summary and a discussion of the differential diagnosis. The clinical diagnosis is then made and discussed. Additional diagnostic testing is discussed and the management of the condition dealt with in some detail. Each chapter is followed by a bibliography of recent relevant references.

This system works very well. The cases are interesting and well illustrated with line drawings of visual field defects, photographs of the fundi and of CT scans. There is straightforward practical information on the best approach to a particular clinical problem, and the writing style is both easy and lucid. In addition to the illustrations of case reports, there are 25 good quality colour photographs of the optic disc in various conditions.

This book can be recommended both to medical students, who will find it interesting and stimulating and also to ophthalmologists, neurologists and neurosurgeons in training. At £27 it is good value and there should be a copy in every medical school, eye department and neurology department library.

J ELSTON


This is Volume 16 in the series on Major Problems in Neurology brought out by WB Saunders. A number of the previous volumes have been distinguished and this book carries on the fine tradition. Indeed, my reaction when looking at the book for the first time was one of admiration for the sheer staying power of the two authors who have clearly put a vast amount of effort into writing the 666 pages all by themselves. A number of volumes on infections of the nervous system have been published over the last few years, some of them excellent, but these have usually been multi-authored. One advantage of this dual authorship approach is that the book has a uniformity of style which is not at all that common nowadays.

The book is very comprehensive and wide in scope. Just about every neurological infection is discussed to a greater or lesser extent. After an initial general chapter on cerebral spinal fluid abnormalities in CNS infections, the authors chose to cover the manifold infectious conditions under a relatively small number of general topics. These include acute purulent meningitis, acute lymphocytic meningitis, chronic meningitis, including CNS tuberculosis and fungal infections, suppuration and focal disease encompassing brain abscess, parameningeal infections, toxoplasmosis, cystercerosis and other helminth infections, and this is followed by a chapter on acute encephalitis which is almost 100 pages long and includes the herpes viruses, HIV, measles, cerebral malaria and many others. Separate chapters are then devoted to poliomyelitis and other entroviruses, rabies, syphilis and the parainfectious conditions. There is then a short chapter on slow viruses followed by a section on infections affecting peripheral nerves at the motor end-plate, and finally a chapter on muscle infections.

Clearly with such a wide range of subjects to discuss the authors have found it necessary to impose some kind of classification scheme and no such scheme can be perfect. However, their approach seems to me to be very reasonable although it does have the disadvantage that different aspects of a particular topic are often not covered in one chapter; for example, to get all the information on varicella zoster virus infections one has to look up several sections of the book under different subsections. This is, however, not a real criticism because it is inevitable. There are certainly no major omissions in this book which is really remarkably comprehensive, and the authors have not shied away from tropical or parasitic infections. My only criticisms are not major ones. For example, in general I found that the pathogenetic sections in the various chapters would have benefited from some expansion, as for example, in the sections on herpes viruses and HIV. Likewise, there is relatively little discussion on molecular biological aspects of many of these diseases and this is particularly important since molecular approaches are now proving so useful in the pathogenesis and diagnosis of neurological infections.

More importantly, I thought that HIV infections really did deserve a separate chapter rather than being subsumed under the acute encephalitis section. While the discussion on HIV infections was perfectly reasonable, I think this could have been expanded especially as regards the difficult issues of
pathogenesis of some of these conditions. In the section on slow viruses, it would have perhaps been useful to have discussed scrapie and its pathogenesis in more detail and also to have covered Visna infection of sheep.

Overall the authors have done a fine job and have produced a thoroughly worthwhile volume which is extremely well referenced. The book is not cheap, but in view of its length the price is not unreasonable. I shall certainly find this useful as a ready to hand reference source and I am sure that it deserves to be on the shelves of any good neurological library. PGE KENNEDY


The *Companion to Psychiatric Studies* has for many years been the principal textbook used by postgraduate students of psychiatry, though its ascendant position has been challenged recently by the appearance of two competing textbooks from the Maudsley Hospital and Oxford. The fourth edition of the book will without doubt re-establish its position as the leader in the field.

The problems confronting the editors of any textbook of psychiatry are enormous. The subject does not have the clear boundaries as, for instance, a discipline like neurology. Knowledge of the causes of the major mental illnesses is still in its infancy, and for many conditions treated by psychiatrists there are competing and often mutually exclusive perspectives. This leads to the difficulty of how to be comprehensive without being over inclusive. The principal North American textbook of psychiatry covers three weighty volumes and exemplifies the latter problem. The *Companion*, in marked contrast, manages in less than 800 pages to give a clear and concise overview of the subject.

In this new edition the editors have introduced two completely new chapters, on psychiatric epidemiology and epilepsy, as well as re-writes, by new authors, of seven other chapters. All the remaining chapters have been substantially updated. The format of the book is as in previous editions, with the early sections focusing on the sciences and allied disciplines relevant to psychiatry. The remaining 28 chapters cover the range of problems seen in psychiatric practice including sections on mental handicap, child psychiatry, adolescent psychiatry and psychiatric disorders of child birth. Professor Kendall contributes all three chapters on the major psychoses and it would be hard to find a better summary of the current state of knowledge.

No text book can claim to be totally comprehensive and its aims should be more modest, serving as a source of basic information, as well as providing a jumping-off point for further research and study. In this respect the *Companion to Psychiatric Studies* will remain a valuable guide to postgraduate students of psychiatry, psychiatrists and other professionals seeking an accessible and sound guide to the field.


This is a text book of human physiology directed specifically towards anaesthetists, who as the authors note, probably now comprise the largest hospital speciality. The authors' aim has been to provide a description of the general principles and crucial concepts necessary for a sound understanding of nervous system function. Coverage is comprehensive but with emphasis on such areas of particular relevance to anaesthetists as pain, respiration and mechanism of arousal, attention and consciousness.

The book comprises 28 chapters arranged in five groups. Part 1 is entitled *Cellular Organisation of the Nervous System* and is followed by *The Afferent Nervous System, Higher Nervous Functions, Interaction with the Environment and finally Regulation of the Internal Environment.* In general the text is very clearly written and much more readable than is often the case with works in this field. The title is perhaps somewhat misleading since the clinical content is rather less than I for one had anticipated. For example, although the physiology of the neuromuscular function is of course well described, there is surprisingly little on myasthenia and related disorders. The authors make a particular point of the illustrations, noting that in many publications there is over simplification, and especially omission of the connections of the mid-brain and diencephalon. Here an attempt has been made to give a truer representation but this results in some exceedingly complicated figures, not wholly remedied by the unusually lengthy figure legends. I wonder how much the addition of colour would have added to the cost of the book—shades of grey are really inadequate for figures of this complexity.

This work will be a most useful addition to the library of any department of anaesthetics or neurology and is competitively priced to be affordable by the individual; those who do buy it and who make use of it will consider the money well spent.

**NMP MURRAY**


Since 1980 magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) has evolved from the research laboratory to become a routine part of diagnostic radiology and although there is a plethora of specialist journal articles and several books devoted to it, the overall place of MRI in the diagnosis of cranial disease is only now being established. Allen Elster in his latest text from the Bowman Gray School of Medicine, North Carolina, has attempted to consolidate the sum of knowledge of cranial MRI and condense this information into an easily assimilated form which he claims is more than just a book on "CT with different pictures". How far has he succeeded in explaining these concepts of biophysics and imaging strategies?

Generally, his aims are fulfilled: the book is divided into twelve chapters starting with the now obligatory descriptions of MRI machines and the physical principles of the signals produced. This is followed by a comprehensive explanation of pulse sequences with good examples of the different appearances when each parameter in turn is changed. These early sections are marred only by the incorrect underestimated values given for T1 and T2 of liquids such as CSF or urine which should have relaxation times of at least 3,000 ms and 2,500 ms respectively (pages 13, 15). This introduction leads to sections on normal anatomy, normal variants and congenital and developmental anomalies. They adequately cover the common diagnostic areas.

In the following chapters cerebral disease is described on a novel patho-anatomical basis being divided into a discussion of the ventricles and subarachnoid spaces in health and disease, neoplasms, cerebral vascular disease, infections and inflammatory diseases, degenerative diseases and abnormalities of the skull base and orbit. Chapter 10 entitled "Hemorrhage, trauma and