Muscle cramp is difficult to diagnose in a community survey. The criteria we used, however, were probably too stringent. The proportion of the adult population of The Netherlands that had at least a single muscle cramp in 1988 was estimated at 36%. This high incidence agrees with empirical data from previous studies. Occurrence of cramp may thus be considered as nothing unusual in otherwise healthy adults. Age adjusted incidence ratios showed a 3.2 female preponderance, which was not accounted for by pregnancy associated muscle cramp, as women beyond childbearing age were particularly affected (table). Age had little effect on the proportion of the population suffering. Nevertheless, older people suffering from cramp had attacks more often than younger people (data not shown). At any age, muscles in calves (84%) and feet (39%) were most often affected. Men showed a slight tendency for cramp in calves (v 78%) and arms and hands (25% v 11%) whereas women more often suffered from cramp in feet and toes (53% v 25%). Wearing high heeled shoes may in part account for this. Pregnancy was the most important risk factor predisposing to muscle cramp (odds ratio 6.3; 95% confidence interval 1.0 to 38.6). Muscleskeletal pain and stiffness also correlated with muscle cramp (2.8; 1 to 7.2). Irritation from diet, overworked, or overloaded joints, tendons, or muscles may provoke cramp. Subjects with generalised muscle twitching and fasciculations are prone to developing cramp. In our survey, however, the correlation between fasciculations and muscle cramp was insignificant (1.6; 0.9 to 2.8).

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5 Jansen PHP, Joosten EMG, Vingerhoets HM. Muscle cramp, muscle function and exacerbation by credit card (Mastercard, Visa or American Express) stating card number, expiry date, and your full name.


This well known annual round-up of neuroscience topics has continued since 1902. An invaluable collection, it is still in the same useful format, but the style of Currier's comments shows even more informality than before, containing pertinent remarks and many personal chatty asides which considerably enliven the text.

Any attempt to capsize the literature in Neurology and Neurosurgery can be seen as testing a neurological Armageddon. There are now available many publications of abstracts, advances and trends; the individual reader's preferences rest with his assessment of the articles selected, the adequacy of the abstract, and the presentation. Once again the Year Book seems to have forgotten nothing of significance. The skill required to produce such intelligible, readable abstracts and commentaries is self-evident.

Thepreface reportsthe sad passing of Rudolf De Jong on August 21, 1990: "In northern Michigan there was a most unusually beautiful shimmering display of northern lights . . . it was not hard to believe, as probably the Indians did, . . . that there was a magical interaction, perhaps a signal of some happening, such as the death of a great chief."

With such touches, it is irresistible.

JMS PEARCE


As theeditors of this multi-author text rightly point out much of the early work on cerebral localisation was based on study of patients with cerebrovascular lesions. The title of this volume might lead one to expect an update on this but, in fact, it covers a much wider field. There is a good section on cerebrovascular pathology, microcirculation, blood flow, metabolism and imaging. There follows an overview of the clinical situation including epidemiology, the relationship with cardiac disease and a summary review of current management.
The much neglected problem of post-stroke depression, which so often interferes with successful rehabilitation, receives extensive coverage. Emphasis is laid on the frequent presence of a syndrome of dementia which is clearly not true dementia as it is reversed by successful treatment of the depression. It must of course be distinguished from true vascular dementia which may also be present but is well described.

All this precedes the section on neuropsychological deficits which are encountered in cerebrovascular disease including those of speech and hearing. This ends with a chapter on neuropsychological rehabilitation which consists of an extensive review of published studies which, though not leading to firm conclusions, give the reader some idea of the state of the art and the research worker good indications of what further studies need to be carried out. All in all, this is a good publication and, by current standards, reasonably priced at £40.

JOHN MARSHALL


The Editors are to be congratulated in collecting together well over half of the material presented at the symposium and publishing it as a series of 250 short, well-edited and excellently illustrated papers in under one year after the event. The scientific standard of the material presented varies considerably, some being excellent but others more in the nature of preliminary communications or case reports. There is an alphabetical index of authors but not of subject matter, which is, however, to some extent subdivided into sections related by pathology or by region studied.

There is no doubt that those who participated in the conference will find the book of great value, but all neurologists who were unable to attend will surely wish to spend a few hours assimilating this material.

BRIAN KENDALL


This second edition of Acquired Aphasia follows ten years after the first and has a broadly similar format. It contains sixteen chapters by different authors, which include an historical account of aphasia, aphasia classification and assessment, neuroanatomical correlates, phonological, lexical and sentence processing, aphasia following head injury and in dementia, recovery and rehabilitation. The Boston classification of aphasia is adopted, reflecting the all-American authorship and predominant neurological emphasis.

However, a recurring theme is the importance of explicit cognitive theory in providing a framework within which to interpret patterns of language disorder and the value of cognitive models. It is illustrated by some case histories. The quality of the writing is of a uniformly high standard and the breadth of the coverage and historical perspective result in a valuable and interesting text. What is lacking in reality is the sense of current controversy and dynamism, perhaps stemming from the similar perspective of most authors.

D NEARY


Advances in Haemapheresis

The Editor is grateful to the following who assisted in the assessment of papers submitted in 1991

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