
This is a guidebook for patients, their friends and their relatives to the changing landscape of “neuro-scientific” parochial non-technical writing, and recurring sections entitled “If you think you have . . .” or “If a friend or relative has . . .” well fulfills its laudable intention of depression, hypochondria, schizophrenia, dementia, and alcohol abuse; less good on anxiety disorder, drug abuse; and antisocial personality; and weak on problems of sexuality.

The book’s triumphalist conclusion, “The Future of Mental Illness”, rashly promises “the causes and effects of mental illness”. The author reveals himself as an unreconstructed believer in the bi-o-medical model, with the gene as its Rosetta Stone. The environment is often ignored or denigrated: thus, saying “investigators cannot specify a single environmental contributor to schizophrenia” (p.209), ignores neurodevelopmental anomalies in aetiology, or expressed emotions in relapse. Behavioural/cognitive therapies are barely mentioned for phobias, anxiety disorders, or depression, and psychotherapy seems merely to mean family education about the new wonder drugs and the future stories and hopes from understanding DNA. Occasionally the book’s balance is eccentric: two pages on the arcane molecular biology of heat-shock proteins illustrate the bizarre suggestion that stress, “as used in environmental studies . . . lacks measurable physical properties, so it is undefined . . .” and progress must wait until we have “translated stress to the levels [typified in the biology of the heat-shock proteins]”. At its best this book is very good, explaining difficult ideas well. The section “If you are concerned about ECT . . .” is exemplary. But it is narrowed by being written by a physician interested principally in biology. Its insular American view will restrict its utility elsewhere, since drug names are unfamiliar, legal procedures irrelevant, colloquialisms obscure (What is a “barrio”?), and assumptions are parochial (in depression, “get firearms out of the home”).

C. H. McMANUS


This book has a good go at filling a gap in the books that Child Psychiatrists and Paediatricians ought to be reading. The increase in techniques for the recognition of brain disorders underlying disagreeable behaviour strongly suggests that all child specialists would benefit from greater acquaintance with those diseases liable to present in ways that bring them to specialists other than Child Neurologists. Even to entertain the notion of organic causation has slipped behind the horizon of possibilities for too many Child psychiatrists, especially in Britain. But that failure is not unique to them. The needs are clearly stated by Tanguay in his useful preface.

There are excellent chapters on Neuromuscular diseases, on Movement Disorders, and on Progressive disorders of the nervous system. Most of the topics of Pae-diatic Neurology are represented.

The book does not fulfil its intention of making a bridge between the disciplines because the authors, and the editors, make no allowance for the cast of mind or the level of knowledge of their proposed readership. No consideration is given to the special manner in which these diseases will present when they appear in their various disguises in the clinics of non-neurologists. This is an area in which the potential reader needs to be seduced, persuaded towards seeing the value of this point of view. For the most part the reader is simply overwhelmed by the facts as in any hard nosed volume of paediatric neurology they might come upon. But, for a rich library its worth a look until a second edition comes along.

DC TAYLOR


Chronic, non-progressive brain disorders constitute a major cause of childhood and adult disability and are certainly the most frequent reason for referral to the paediatric neurologist. Lesions of the developing brain occurring before, or shortly after birth result in a wide variety of deficits affecting intellectual and motor development. The editors of this multi-author book have aimed to provide an in-depth account of the subject and to illustrate those specific conditions where recent advances in neuro-imaging and molecular genetics have led to more precise understanding of their aetiology. The recognition of a genetic or developmental abnormality of the brain not only has important implications for the child and his family, but is crucial when medico-legal action is being considered for presumptive birth injury.

The first section of the book gives an overview of the definition, causation and management problems of mental retardation and cerebral palsy, attention being given to etiological factors, the importance of communication with parents, and ethics of treatment. A chapter on “neurodevelopmental evaluation” is, unfortunately of limited use to the UK practitioner, dealing largely with these texts used in the US. However, the chapter on imaging by Barkovich is excellent, with a clear text and superb MRI illustrations, particularly of the malformations.

The later sections of the book cover a selection of specific retardation syndromes, including a description of the phenomenon of genomic imprinting, as illustrated by Angelman and Prader-Willi syndromes. The account by Dobyns, of the causes and consequences of spina bifida, is particularly interesting. The book also covers acquired brain lesions, ranging from hypoxic ischaemic injury, to the CNS effects of cocaine in children.

This book will be of interest to paediatricians and neurologists, particularly in training. It is expensive at £144.00, but would be recommended for departmental libraries to complement standard paediatric neurology texts.

STEPHANIE A ROBB


The highly complex relationship between the development of the brain and our psychological and social development has been recognised for many years. Increasing knowledge, however, is now helping to resolve these complexities, and a book addressing these issues faces unique challenges. Can a multi-author book originating in international proceedings succeed?

On the whole I think it does. The opening sentence of the forward is not promising for those seeking illumination: “An individual functions and develops as a totality in a way that can be described as a multi-determined stochastic process”. Readers should nevertheless press on. Here is a well edited and organised collection of papers beginning with an up to date and readable account of the development of the human brain. In the following chapter, perhaps the most lucid and cogently argued of all, Robert Goodwin outlines the putative role of insults to the developing brain in causing psycho-social disorders, and examines critical issues of timing and contextualisation. Other authors present informative and wide ranging views of psychogenetics, pre- and peri-natal risk factors and neurodevelopmental factors. As the authors repeatedly acknowledge, our capacity for conjecture in these areas far outstrips our capacity for refutation. Nevertheless, with the increasing sophistication of investigative procedures, over the next few years many of the imaginative hypotheses explored in this book will take their place under the microscope. This is a useful reference work for practitioners and researchers in the fields of autism, mental impairment, language, speech and other “developmental” disorders.

GLYNN HARRISON

Measurement in Neurological Rehabili-

A natural consequence of Neurologists’ reputa-
tion for obsessi-

onality is a habituation to objective measurements aimed at achieving precision from the imprecise. This book is not, as the title suggests, primarily about rehabilitation, but is a collection of a variety of assessment scales which find use both in neurological disease and advancing disabil-

ity. It ranges from behavioural, cognitive, depression and social assessments, through multiple sclerosis, strokes, head and spinal injuries, and Parkinson’s disease. Each section is accompanied by the background problems and provides selected scales accompanied by comment and reference. A worthy, if laborious compilation, of considerable use and convenience between two paperback covers.

This excellent overview of neurological Lyme disease will be welcomed and is undoubtedly the best currently available. Since the discovery of the causative spirochetae by American researchers there has been an exponential increase in knowledge. Inevitably, knowledge has been accompanied by argument about the clinical spectrum of neurological Lyme disease and the criteria for diagnosis. One might ask whether the title of a monograph at this time should be “Current controversies in neurological Lyme disease” rather than confirming the authoritative text of a book. The point is illustrated by the furor at a Lyme disease conference reported in a recent issue of Science. In essence this incident concerned the efforts of Patient Support Groups who got a dozen rejected papers reinstated at a Lyme disease meeting angering researchers who had turned down these as unscientific.

In fairness the author has made a courageous attempt to give a fair and well argued assessment of the current literature. He refers to all the sources of controversy about the validity and significance of a positive serological test for Lyme disease. Currently we do not have available an immunological diagnostic test diagnostic of active disease. Recent studies would suggest that an antibody production detected in the CSF may be more helpful in the diagnosis of CNS Lyme disease but even in this area controversy remains because of apparent discrepancies experience in Europe and North America. False positive results are probably not a major diagnostic problem but the persistence of antibody production in patients with definite Lyme disease who have been adequately treated remains. Most importantly, it is clear from epidemiological studies that strongly positive results may be obtained in the absence of any clinical evidence or history of Lyme disease. In hyper-endemic areas for example, and also in patients who are vocationally exposed to tick bite, the incidence of positive results may be up to 25%.

The end result was expressed baldly by a researcher in the Lyme disease conference who was reported to say “You see many... patients who do not have Lyme disease, but who think they do.” The evidence for and against this spectrum of disease is carefully presented by the author in the text.

Lest this review should appear too critical it is important to say that the book is an invaluable source of reference to Neurologists who may see neurological Lyme disease only occasionally, provided the reader allows for the generosity of the author.

N F Lawton


The first edition of this book provoked a lot of interest because of its profusion of figures and diagrams and these remain one of the cardinal features of the second edition. They are particularly valuable in the sections dealing with history, examination and clinical presentation and for these reasons alone the book can be firmly recommended. The other unusual feature of the book is the integration of neurology with neurosurgery.

As in any book it is possible to find minor things to criticise and as Professor van Gijn indicates in his foreword one can always quibble about details but what matters is the general organisation of a book and this is certainly excellent. The only weakness is at the same time the book’s main strength, namely the use of diagrams. There are particular circumstances, such as when dealing with imaging and pathology, where real pictures are better than diagrams and although the diagrams of the normal CT and MRI scans are quite good, those illustrating the abnormal are inadequate.

Overall, this is an excellent book and one that will be attractive to both medical students and postgraduates. The appearance of a second edition so soon after the first indicates that the book must have sold well and I suspect we can hope that the second edition will do better than the first.

NEF CARTLIDGE


This latest issue in the series of “Recent Advances in Epilepsy” maintains the interest and diversity of its predecessors, with authoritative reviews on topics from molecular genetics to behavioural therapy.

Of most practical utility must be the chapter by Scheuer on “medical aspects of managing seizures and epilepsy”. This provides a helpful summary of the therapeutic problems, notably not exclusively drug interactions, arising in patients with epilepsy associated with other medical conditions. Other informative reviews address prenatal and perinatal risk factors for epilepsy (Wallace), post-traumatic epilepsy (Willmore) and seizures associated with HIV infection (Labar). Perlin and De Lorenzo under the title of “calculus and epilepsy” provide a review of the cellular mechanisms of epileptogenesis, considerably more wide ranging than the title may suggest, but curiously say nothing about the, as yet not very encouraging, results of clinical trials of calcium entry blockers in epilepsy.

Trials of three new drugs are reported, however, but several similar reviews of these have also recently appeared elsewhere. Other approaches to treatment are represented by a report of a surgical series of patients with cortical dysplasia (Janota and Polkey) and a stimulating account of behavioural therapy by Fenwick.

The very diversity of the material covered may mean that few readers will have sufficient breadth of background knowledge to be able to follow all the articles. One wonders whether future issues in this series could not be targeted at a rather wider readership. Nevertheless there is much to justify the attention both of general neurologists and those with a specialist interest in epilepsy.

C D Binnie


This is a dangerous book in which the emperor, rehabilitation, is offered new clothes that are not only insubstantial but are in fact misleading. This book develops the thesis that because (a) change (recovery) occurs in the nervous system, therefore (b) therapists can influence the process, and thus (c) change. It reviews evidence that change can occur within the nervous system especially after damage. Although the assumption is undoubtedly true (we all learn, and changes occur even after all the insult to the nervous system), the review is not good and its style is patronising to the target readership of therapists. At times it gives excessive biochemical detail, often irrelevant to the main thrust of the book. It is not a thorough or critical review of the evidence, but a biased presentation of selected studies.

Then the authors suggest that some therapies (e.g. biofeedback) can influence and modify these processes. Often the suggestions are simply stated as being ‘true’, sometimes they are simply hoped to be true. No evidence is ever presented to link therapy to the facts given about neural plasticity. However, the two theses in the book are so intertwined that the reader who is convinced that the scientific detail given is correct may come to assume that the other assertions made are also correct.

I conclude that this book may be read by many therapists who will falsely believe it to be a valid justification of their techniques. It throws up some promising ideas and is supported by some unmitigated beliefs underlying rehabilitation (e.g. Bobath, for which no evidence was ever presented) with ‘neural plasticity’. DERICK T WADE


It is over 30 years since the Doppler shift of ultrasonic waves was first used to measure blood flow through arteries but it is only recently that the technique has come into its own. This long gestation period was largely due to the fact that good results are very dependent upon the skill of the operator. Until recently few people have felt it worthwhile developing that skill, it was much easier to order an angiogram. As evidence of the value of carotid endarterectomy for certain categories of stenosis has accumulated, the need for a non-invasive screening test which could, if applicable, change the trend. This, together with technical advances which gives good pictures of the wall of the artery as well as the blood flow through it, has brought Neurosonology, as it has to come to be seen, into the forefront of the process.

This is reflected in the present volume which contains over 100 papers presented, largely by Japanese authors, at the Fourth Meeting of the Neurosonology Research Group of the WFN at Hiroshima. The papers