
This is a straightforward, well written introduction to skull base surgery suitable for junior residents in neurosurgery and perhaps neurologists seeking an overview of this subject. It is well referenced but is not sufficient for the Intercollegiate Board exam. There is overlap with chapters both for neuroradiology and for subfrontal/anterior visual pathway meningiomas. The chapters on pituitary, interventional radiology, cavernous sinus pathway and acoustic schwannoma are superficial, didactic introductions. I found no introduction to the ethical problems created by some of the more adventurous procedures for the more malignant lesions. There is no mention of Utley's use of the transcranial approach to mid-basilar aneurysms.

In summary, the Johns Hopkins Center for skull base surgery have produced an easy-to-read introduction to the subject but not one that really satisfies.

JD PICKARD


This book is well produced and comprehensively referenced. Nearly forty authors contribute to the twenty-four chapters dealing with psychological issues that arise in the management of head injured patients from the acute stage, to social security disability, long after discharge. This is a book by psychologists for psychologists and I do not think that it will appeal to the generality of British Neurologists who may consider themselves fortunate to secure the interest of a psychologist for even a brief phase of their head injured patients management.

Inevitably this book structure leads to repetition, and many chapters rehearse the general statistics of head injury. On the other hand, those who have a special interest in this area will find source references discussed in detail together with several treatment protocols and their outcomes. On the whole the scope for psychological intervention and its outcome are considered passionately. Some contributions tend to be wordy—there has to be a shorter way of expressing "psycho-pharmacological interventions maybe useful to optimise attentional function" but that should not obscure the wealth of information here compiled.

PAUL MILLAC


Can one, should one, criticise a book which is now in its 3rd edition and sells by the thousands to keen young students of the nervous system? Of course.

It costs only one fiftieth the price of most books reviewed in these columns and yet contains more clearly presented information and generates far more understanding. Incidentally, I once asked a student if he judged a good book; one of the best is "From Neuron to Brain", he told me, "I wish my company had something like that!". The type, the layout, the figures, headings, the binding—the clever use of a strip of green and colour (blue) and the use of boxes in the text to explain points which might otherwise interrupt the flow of text all had his admiration—and mine too.

Students of mature years, like me, began neuroscience studies with Hodgkin and Huxley. Now it begins with ion channels, their conductivity and molecular arrangement in the membrane. The authors have a firm understanding of their readers' capabilities; difficult concepts are clearly explained and descriptions of methods are given where they aid understanding. Boxes are used sparingly. Most neuropsychologists physiology books will tell you about second messages in synaptic transmission and mention cyclic AMP, knowledge of which is assumed. These authors kindly supply a box which gives the essential biochemistry of cyclic AMP, how it was discovered and something of its wider role. Boxes are easy to identify and read separately so that the flow of the main text is maintained.

Everything then flows beautifully and is highly recommended. Everything to do with molecular and cellular function is as near perfect as a textbook can ever be. But neurons form nervous systems and the last 200 pages deal with systems. From here on the keen student is going to look forward to learning about some fascinating aspects of brain function such as consciousness, balance, memory, arousal and attention, but he will be sadly disappointed for none of the above appear in the index. Subjects such as pain, perception and sleep get short, inadequate and misleading treatment. There is a bit about amino acid neurotransmitters and there is a scarce mention of the neuroendocrine function. These are very important features in the brain (eg serotonin), and their role is briefly and sparsely dealt with. These are the greatest changes since Purves wrote twenty years ago with the identification of an increasing number of neurotransmitters and determination of their function. Against this background the place in which the cerebral circulation responds to demands upon it is clearly described.

Although the book is basically concerned with physiology and pharmacology, there is a useful final section of 62 pages on the more common disorders affecting the cerebral circulation, including ischaemia, migraine, subarachnoid haemorrhage and ageing. Each chapter has abundant references and clear diagrams and illustrations and there is a good index. This will be an essential reference book for anyone working on the cerebral circulation and cerebrovascular disease.

JOHN MARSHALL


A plethora of publications on the cerebral circulation has appeared over the last two decades. All have been reports of conferences and symposia, hence have been patchy in their coverage, reflecting the interests of the participants rather than the needs of the subject. Indeed, since the cerebral circulation symposium at M.J.Purves, published in 1972, there has been no systematic treatment of the subject. This deficit has now been remedied in a very satisfactory manner by the present publication which reflects the stimulating Scots-Scandinavian partnership which has grown up over the years.

There is first a clear presentation of the anatomy of the cerebral circulation, a knowledge of which is essential for an understanding of function. This is followed by a section on the physiology of the cerebral circulation after which comes a longer section on pharmacology. To put it simply, the greatest change since Purves wrote twenty years ago with the identification of an increasing number of neurotransmitters and determination of their function. Against this background the place in which the cerebral circulation responds to demands upon it is clearly described.

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JOHN MARSHALL


Readers of the Archives of Neurology will be familiar with the series of "Controversies" edited by Vladimir Hachinski, which have debated a wide range of neurological topics. Dr Hachinski has brought together an excellent selection of "Challenges in Neurology" in this new compilation. Allowing authors greater scope than in the Archives the topics chosen are very ably discussed, and each chapter or section is preceded by a pithy but cogent comment from Dr Hachinski.

This volume is very much aimed at the practising neurologist and commences with excellent discussions of diagnostic and management approaches to the dizzy patient, who still cause physicians to 'experience a slight decline in spirits' as Bryan Matthews so aptly described. This is followed by a discussion of patients with whiplash injuries who are being seen with increasingly frequent frequency and their medicolegal implications often pose a particularly difficult group to treat.
The section of six chapters on epilepsy provides useful up to the minute accounts of seizure prophylaxis, when to discontinue anticonvulsants, and indications for surgical treatments. Although reviews of these topics can be found scattered in the literature, the selection of chapters in this book cover the main problem areas in epilepsy and their parallel approach to most neurologists with some useful nuggets of information.

The three chapters on movement disorders are the least successful in the volume. Adrenal transplants in Parkinson's disease is now known to be of no therapeutic value, and the chapter on neural transplantation is, by the very nature of the speed of progress in this field, out of date. The final chapter in this trio competently deals with the management of the refractory Parkinsonian patient. Other sections deal with brain tumours (3 chapters) and intensive care neurology (2 chapters).

As a form of postgraduate education for neurologists I would strongly recommend this anthology, but could not advocate personal purchase by neurologists because of its high cost. Rather it would make a useful addition to the Library when I expect it will frequently change hands.

Christopher Kennard


This book begins well by introducing issues which are specifically relevant to the neurology of old age—for example, the distinction between "healthy" and "impaired" elderly people, and between age-related and age-dependent disease. Other useful chapters in a similar vein are those on the neurological consultation at age 80, on falls and gait disorders, incontinence, and on ethics. However, some parts of the material seem out of place in a relatively short book which is addressed to a wide audience. The textbook writers"s vice is to prefer comprehensiveness to common sense. It is hardly sensible to give Steele Richardson syndrome almost as much (or as little) space as Parkinson's disease, or to give PET scanning so much attention in a neuroimaging chapter, while giving scant guidance on pragmatic issues such as the sensitivity, specificity and cost-effectiveness of routinely available techniques. The statement on p. 84 that "the CT scan has revolutionized the diagnosis of dementia" is slightly misleading (and no less so when the same paragraph is repeated, verbatim, on p. 179, but with a different reference cited).

The avowed emphasis of the book is on dementias but imbalance is a problem here, too. The diagnostic assessment of dementias dominates chapters on neuroimaging and on psychometry, and occupies 25 of 29 pages of a chapter on diagnosis and management. This chapter is followed, in a slightly awkward sequence, by a detailed review of the basic neurobiology of Alzheimer's disease (with 367 references). There are less than four pages on management of the dementias. Most space is devoted to treatment of concurrent medical problems such as hypothyroidism. Discussion of experimental drug treatments is cursory and undocumented. One would hope for guidance on the involvement of the neurologist in multidisciplinary management and for some discussion of support services such as day centres and respite care facilities. Unfortunately the ordinary reality of Alzheimer's and other similar dementias, as they are experienced by the vast majority of patients and families, is inadequately considered in this book.

The book implies that the "role of the physician in Alzheimer's disease largely involves deploying expensive technologies and elaborate tests in the pursuit of unlikely alternative diagnoses."

Overall, the reader is left with a rather conventional, and thus incomplete, image of old age neurology as a clinical activity.

Christopher D Ward


Inherited Ataxias provides a comprehensive account of diagnostic, biochemical, genetic and experimental advances. The sonorous "olivopontocerebellar atrophy" has long since been abbreviated to the acronym OPCA with numerous subtypes. Even so I was surprised to find that the use of a hyphen in ataxia-telangiectasia required tactful comment alongside the immunological, cytogenetic and radiosensitivity abnormalities of T cells. The hyphenated eponym, Louis-Barr disease, has been sunk without trace and we are now required to understand "complementation" of various mutations. Molecular genetics are achieving increasing importance in defining clinical entities and even modern variants such as Machado-Joseph disease and Spastic Ataxia of Charlevoix-Saguenay are liable to disappear.

Anyone reading that "despite their rarity, the inherited prion diseases are the best understood neurodegenerative disorders" will realise they must view the inherited ataxias in a new light. Indeed, elsewhere in the book, as the real world reality, they are guided through the cellular architecture of the cerebellar cortex; can memorise, if they so wish, the individualized neurotransmitters and neuromodulatory systems of each cell type, and understand the projected role of second messenger systems concerned with intracellular transmission and homeostasis. That this multi-author, multinational book succeeds for the clinician owes much to the skill with which it has been collated and edited.

EMR Critchley


This is the second in a series devoted to neurology, the first concerned epilepsy. 100 Maxims is a good idea and not a gimmick to reshuffle other books on Parkinson's disease. It is far from a "scissors and paste" job. Three authors have written about the 100 most important facts concerning the diagnosis, treatment, cause and associated features of Parkinson's disease. It has led to pithy statements which are accessible and easily read. Indeed this book was a pleasure to review, and one of the few neurology books I have managed to read from cover to cover.

The sections on diagnosis are especially enjoyable. Here are clinicians writing well about the subject they know and practice every day. In addition the book is up to date and well referenced. All aspects of PD are covered, albeit in a succinct fashion. Nevertheless not much is missing. The section on aetiology is one of the more lucid accounts of a difficult area. The clinical perspective though, holds sway with tips on how to identify other diseases resembling PD, and practical steps, which are always pharmacological to help patients. This book offers a pragmatic response to the problems of PD. It is difficult to praise it too highly, so don't be put off by the title as this is the best small book on Parkinson's Disease. Every physician who comes into contact with PD could benefit from reading it.

CG Clough

Short Notices