Prognosis of Neurological Disorders

EDITED BY RW EVANS, DS BASKIN AND FM YATSU (Pp 714; Price: £95.00 (H/bk)) 1992. Oxford University Press. ISBN 0 19 505699 X

Neurologists will be asked on a virtually daily basis, "What is the prognosis" for any given condition, not only by out patients and colleagues but also increasingly by the legal profession. With the increase in complexity of intervention in neurological conditions both medical and surgical, it is almost impossible for a Neurologist or Neurosurgeon to be fully aware of trials and treatment regimes which have taken place in other than his own specialist field of interest. More publications may involve considerable "searching" through literature to answer a specific question.

This volume, edited by Evans, Baskin and Yatsu, is therefore timely, given that their stated aim is to provide "a compendium of neurological disorders discussed from the viewpoint of prognosis". Each chapter discusses the natural history, if known, of a given disease and its various subtypes: defines any known clinical predictive information and prognostic factors and then discusses how medical and/or surgical intervention has modified the outcome.

Virtually all the contributors have produced high quality assessments of natural history and the consequences of intervention. The chapters are heavily referenced.

The Editors have succeeded admirably in their stated aims and have produced a volume which I believe will prove invaluable to the practising Neurologist or Neurosurgeon, particularly if they are involved in medicolegal practice.

WJK CUMMING

Therapeutic Claims in Multiple Sclerosis.

3rd Edition. Edited by WM A SIBLEY. (Pp 202; Price \$13.95 p/bk, \$21.95 h/bk). 1992 by the National Multiple Sclerosis Society New York, Demos Publications. ISBN 0-939957-53-1.

Most neurologists will have had cause to be grateful for earlier editions of this compilation, prepared for the USA National Multiple Sclerosis Society with the aid of a distinguished international committee. The task of presenting brief and accurate accounts of a multitude of therapeutic claims, informative both to physicians and the public, is far from easy. Each claim, from one extreme of those subjected to the full force of the randomised, double blind, placebo controlled trial, to the other of those reported solely in the more excitable press, is submitted to analysis under the headings of Description, Rationale, Evaluation, Risks/Costs, Conclusion and the opinion of the Committee. The physician will regret the absence of detailed references but their inclusion would either have been too selective or would have overloaded the book.

A section on treatment of acute exacerbation is followed by a chapter cautiously labelled "Methods used to prevent worsening of multiple sclerosis", largely devoted to manipulation of the immune system. It is interesting that the regimes of immunosuppression currently available, particularly cyclophosphamide, are treated with distinctly muted enthusiasm. A valuable section

on symptomatic treatment and general management, including diet, is followed by an alarmingly long chapter on Empirical Treatments. Although this includes a great number of forms of treatment on which there is no information of scientific worth, it is highly informative. Many of these methods do not, fortunately, seem to have crossed the Atlantic, including, I believe, vertebral artery decompression, implantation of pig brain in the abdominal wall, and hysterectomy. Our indignation at this pathetic catalogue should be modified by the realisation that it results from the failure of more "scientific" methods.

BRYAN MATTHEWS

Clinical Neurology: A Modern Approach.

By ANTHONY HOPKINS. (Pp 486; Price: £22.50 (P/bk) £50.00 (H/bk)). 1993. Oxford University Press. ISBN 0-19-262262-5.

"A modern approach" to neurological practice is certainly evident in this single author book that teachers of Neurology will find interesting to read as one rarely goes more than a page without coming across some astute or provocative comment. The discussion on most topics contains a breath of fresh air and covers the breadth of neurology including some psychiatric and rehabilitation issues. Part I covers neurological history taking and the principles of diagnosis, whilst in part II the approach to certain common symptoms is described; and, in part III there is a resumé of the chief neurological disorders. It ends with an approach to physical disability.

The book is aimed at Undergraduates and comparing it with other available texts demonstrates a lively and competitive book that stands out from the crowd. However, one can be forgiven for asking if any of the books for undergraduates demonstrate a modern or innovative approach to teaching and here this volume scores a more qualified goal. The book is quite long and the chapters organised if not written on fairly traditional lines. On the plus side it can be combined with the purchase of two videos on examination. Any modern approach needs to take account of the courses that we all run. It would be nice to have the opportunity to buy, not necessarily with every book, not only videos of the examination but integrated audio-visual examples of history taking and of dealing with particular diagnostic and management situations. More pictures in the text would make for a livelier book, as would more in the way of 'problem solving' case histories with relevant interpretation of investigations. As hopefully, more medical schools move away from a week or two of clinical neuroscience towards the end of course to a more integrated approach with basic neurosciences right from the beginning, the construction of such books may need to be altered and the ability of a single author to cover all such areas competently could be questioned. Perhaps we need more research on what appeals to undergraduates and what they actually read and consider good value or at least ask them to review such books. Neurologists remain highly regarded as clinical teachers, though with some notable exceptions this has not always been reflected in our text books. However this book that blows away many cobwebs is certainly a step in the right direction, and

though the approach is thoroughly modern I suspect as an undergraduate teaching tool such a format will soon be dated.

AC WILLIAMS

Neurological and Neurosurgical Intensive Care—3rd Ed.

Edited by A H ROPPER (Pp 505; Price: \$124.00) 1992. New York, Raven Press. ISBN 0 88167 981 X

It is likely that the outcome of many serious neurological illnesses can be improved by prompt transfer to dedicated neurological intensive care units. Similarly the management of severe head injury even if there is no surgical lesion can be improved by specialist ICU. These are relatively rare occurrences, and a large catchment population is needed for sufficient patient numbers to justify the creation of such units. The call for "safe neurosurgery" with Regional Units of at least 4 neurosurgeons should provide the impetus for neurological and neurosurgical ICUs serving a population of around 2–2.5 million. Neurological intensive care can no longer be the domain of enthusiastic amateurs. Disorders such as encephalitis, rapidly advancing Guillain Barré and myasthenia should be transferred early to Regional Neurological Units housing ICUs. Such units require not only anaesthetists interested in the care of neurological disorders, but neurologists trained in evaluation and management of seriously ill patients. It may be preferable for these neurologists to take on the management of head injured patients (without haematoma) to release valuable neurosurgical time.

Alan Ropper's book now in its third edition remains the definitive reference work. It has a multi-author format and provides both a general approach and specific chapters dedicated to Guillain Barré, myasthenia, encephalitis and status epilepticus. Most neurologists can be completely bamboozled by the most junior anaesthetists when confronted by the array of tubes, flashing lights and wonderful machines that comprises modern intensive care. Reading this book will at least enable him to inspect his patient with some *savoir faire*. It should enable him to ask pertinent questions about the care of the endotracheal tube, the need for barbiturate coma, and the indications for monitoring intracranial pressure. The management of a significant minority of neurological patients will require increasing sophistication. Buy this book if you want to keep up with the new generation of ICU technocrats.

CHRISTOPHER CLOUGH

Mind and Brain.

Readings from SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN MAGAZINE September 1992 Issue (Pp 147 Illustrated; Price £12.95) 1993. Oxford, WH Freeman & Co. Ltd. ISBN 0 7167 2376 X

The ability to make complex scientific discovery and the concepts which arise from it intelligible to the layman is perhaps the hallmark of the real expert. These beautifully illustrated articles comprise a rare source of eleven such quality essays dealing with the interactions between mind and brain in such fields as memory, learning, language, consciousness, neural networks, and ageing. The contributors, all virtuosi neurobiologists, include Francis Crick, Gershon, Kimura, Damasio, and Selkoe. Jonathan Miller provides the epilogue.