
With the increasing longevity of the population, the dementia is becoming more prominent in neurological and psychiatric practice. Although significant advances in understanding the dementias have been made in behavioural neuroscience and neuropsychology, they have not always filtered through to the clinicians managing these disorders. Behavioural neurological attempts to bridge this gap, and thus to improve clinical assessment and management of the dementias. This multi-author North American text achieves this, by providing background theory and clinical application.

The book is well structured: it deals firstly with Alzheimer's disease, focusing on anatomy, neuropsychology and behavioural studies. The chapter on neuropsychology is comprehensive and yet remains accessible to those with no prior knowledge of the subject. There is also a useful chapter on normal ageing. There then follows a lucid account of the other dementias. Although uniformly excellent, the chapters on the vascular dementias, MS, Parkinsonian, and other presenile dementias are particularly clear. There is much here to help in clinically differentiating the dementias. Investigation, by neuroimaging and neurophysiology, is next considered. The use of MRI in diagnosis, e.g. demonstrating hippocampal atrophy in early Alzheimer's, is discussed. The PET chapter links imaging abnormalities with neuropsychological deficit, highlighting the use of functional imaging in neuroanatomical localisation of neuropsychological function. Electroencephalography and evoked potential studies are also covered. Management of the dementias is dealt with in the final section. Pharmacological attempts at treating Alzheimer's, including manipulating the cholinergic system, are discussed. Psychosocial assessment and management, and legal and ethical issues, are addressed.

Although concentrating on Alzheimer's, this book serves as a comprehensive guide regarding the dementias in general. The neurologist or psychiatrist will also find that it improves clinical assessment and management of the dementias. It achieves its aim of bridging the gap between behavioural neuroscience and clinical practice, and is strongly recommended.

JOHN GREENE


The third edition of Paul Cooper's book on head injuries maintains the excellent standard of its predecessors and is one of the most readable and authoritative texts on this prevalent and highly important subject. Some of the chapters have a certain familiarity about them. Reading Hume Adams in Advances in Neuropathology or in the Handbook of Neurology is pretty much the same as it is in Cooper. This is no criticism of Professor Adams, the man has to deal with the subject as best he can and one work will necessarily seem much the same as in another, it is really a criticism of multi-author texts, particularly those which try to take in the whole of such a wide field. It could be avoided by concentrating on the surgical aspects.

Almost all the chapters are of a consistently high quality, although the chapter on cranioplasty reads rather strangely. The disadvantages of ribs are that they absorb, as well as leaving chest wounds. Calvarial grafting makes the whole of the skull thin, which looks ugly and unpleasant for the patient, who has to deal with such a large and unpleasant additional wound. Techniques of preserving bone flaps in the abdominal fat or of sterilising them and reinserting them are not mentioned, nor the technique of preserving them and using them for producing titanium prostheses, which is probably preferable to either of the others. The best current method of cranio-plasty is titanium plating, if necessary made on computerised models derived from CT. This doesn't even get a mention. It is to be hoped that the fourth edition updates this aspect of things to an acceptable modern standard.

The index makes sparse reading. Boxing is not mentioned, neither is boxing dementia.


In reading a multi-author book which covers such a broad spectrum, one tends to focus on one's own area of expertise. One often mainly concern with the comments to some previous colleagues at NIH in hope that the next edition will prove even better than the previous five. The anatomy of the spinal fluid reveals essentially 2/3 lymphocytes and 1/3 macrophages, clearly pointing to an immunological function. Although the daily flow rate may vary in circadian rhythm by up to a factor of 5, there is nevertheless decreased flow with increasing age with concomitant increase in the levels of all proteins. It is well established that the majority of proteins are sieved according to their molecular size, which is reduced in the five-fold difference in the percentage transfer of IgM versus IgA from serum into CSF. Transferrin, (which is not strictly a "peptide"), is synthesised in part by the choroid plexus, as is transferrin. Locally-produced cytokines have major effects on the neuroimmunological response, as contradistinct from responses in other tissues. In spite of these exceptionally minor comments, I would nevertheless offer my wholehearted endorsement of this book. It is a real bargain to get over 1,000 pages for just over £50.

E J THOMPSON