

BOOK REVIEWS

All titles reviewed here are available from the BMJ Bookshop, PO Box 295, London WC1H 9TE. Prices include postage in the United Kingdom and for members of the British Forces Overseas, but overseas customers should add £2 per item for postage and packing. Payment can be made by cheque in sterling drawn on a United Kingdom bank, or by credit card (Mastercard, Visa or American Express) stating card number, expiry date, and your full name.

Therapy of Parkinson's Disease. Second Edition Revised and Expanded. Edited by WILLIAM C KOLLER and GEORGE PAULSON. 1994. (Pp 632; Price: \$165.00). Published by Marcel Dekker, New York. ISBN 0-8247-9226-2.

This book contains an impressive collection of expert opinions and reviews on all aspects of the management of patients with Parkinson's disease. It begins with a fascinating account on the historical treatment of Parkinson's disease, highlighting the successful use early on with plants containing atropine like substances. There then follows sections on the assessment of patients with Parkinson's disease accompanied by chapters on the medical and surgical therapies for Parkinson's disease and concluding with a discussion on the alternative treatments that are available and required by the parkinsonian patient.

The format of each chapter is similar and somewhat daunting, with pages of tightly set script with a paucity of illustrations and tables which can overwhelm the reader before he starts. In this respect the chapters on imaging in Parkinson's disease, pallidotomy, and transplants were especially disappointing as no colour coded PET scans were included, which would have highlighted the strength of this investigation in the parkinsonian patient.

The major section in this book is on the pharmacological treatment of Parkinson's disease and suffers from being rather repetitive and wordy (for example, chapter 15 on lisuride). Overall though this section of the book provides a well balanced account of the relative merits and problems of the drugs commonly used, and in this respect the chapters worthy of special mention are those discussing apomorphine, COMT inhibitors and deprenyl. Indeed the authors of each chapter are to be congratulated on not advocating the use of "their" drug in preference to the gold standard of treatment—namely, levodopa. This section concludes with a discussion on the role of selegiline as a neuroprotective agent. This chapter appropriately comments that there is no convincing evidence in favour of this hypothesis and therefore the question remains as to whether patients should be started on this treatment at the time of diag-

nosis, especially in view of its cost. A point often ignored on this side of the Atlantic.

The surgical approach to the treatment of Parkinson's disease begins correctly with the indications and role for thalamotomy and pallidotomy, before discussing the newer experimental therapies with transplants. However, the discussion on the use of transplants in Parkinson's disease is excellent, especially the account given by Shannon and Goetz on adrenal medullary grafts which represents one of the most well written and up-to-date summaries of this complex topic. The concluding chapter in this section by Paulson on grafts in general, seemed misplaced to me and at this point the chapter found near the end of the book on trophic factors would have seemed more appropriate.

The final two sections of the book deal with the other aspects of the management of patients with Parkinson's disease, areas all too often neglected. There are excellent chapters on diet, speech therapy, physiotherapy and the cognitive difficulties of patients on levodopa therapy. Unfortunately the book is largely written by Americans and so it is frustrating to hear of the value of clozapine in the treatment of psychoses in Parkinson's disease as the drug is not generally licensed for this use in the United Kingdom. Nevertheless these sections provide much sound and useful advice, concluding appropriately with chapters on support associations and what to do when everything fails.

Overall this book is invaluable for the neurologist with an interest in Parkinson's disease and provides a complete and comprehensive account of all aspects of the management of patients with this disease. The format of each chapter is intimidating, and the inclusion of more annotated text/tables and figures would have been welcome and made the book more "reader friendly". In spite of these reservations, however, this book is recommended for those neurologists with an interest in the management of this complex condition.

ROGER BARKER

Medical Neurosciences. By BARBARA F WESTMORELAND, EDUARDO E BENARROCH, JASPER R DAUBE, THOMAS J REAGAN and BURTON A SANDOK. (Pp 553; £30.00.) Published by Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh. 1994. ISBN 0-316-17364-9.

This book in 16 chapters attempts to explain how a knowledge of the neurobiology of the nervous system can be used to understand the clinical discipline of neurology. This is an ambitious aim and the authors are to be congratulated in their attempts to bridge the gap that often exists between our preclinical neuroscience education and the practice of neurology. Unfortunately though, this book is only partly successful and ultimately fails to fulfil its proposed purpose for a number of reasons.

The first difficulty that the book encounters is in defining its proposed readership, and addressing that audience in an appropriate style. It seems that the emphasis in the book is directed towards the medical student rather than the medical practitioner. Thus

interested neurologists would struggle to find the scientific basis for their clinical discipline in this textbook. However, from a medical student perspective the length of each section, and the rather eclectic use of clinical case studies coupled to the repetitious nature of the text makes each chapter difficult to understand and concentrate on, thus alienating it from its intended audience. Furthermore, certain fundamental aspects of neurobiology which are essential to the pre-clinical student are only briefly mentioned, for example the visual system. The limited account of this topic given in this book, in contrast to much of the rest of the book, was far too clinical with no real description given of the basic neurobiology (for instance, the Hubel and Wiesel model of hypercolumns in the primary visual cortex).

Another difficulty that I had with this book is that there appears to be a great deal of repetition, and although this is not in itself a bad thing, it can become irritating and in part is a consequence of the approach used in this book of discussing the nervous system (NS) in terms of *both* levels and systems. In this respect one of the main points that this book emphasises is the organisational nature of the NS in terms of a central core of phylogenetically "older" systems surrounded by more recent phylogenetically developed systems. This in conjunction with the notion of different afferent and efferent systems is a useful starting point for organising the NS but tends to lose the reader in later sections of the book (for example, the discussion on the brainstem). Thus the reader can easily fail to see the point of much that is said and this is compounded by the poor quality of the figures used in this book. Many of the figures are small line drawings that are difficult to read and often fail to illuminate the adjoining text. This book would be greatly improved by a higher quality of illustration that also replaces the older CT with newer MRI (and possibly PET). If textbooks such as this are to appeal to students, then figures of a high standard with the modern imaging techniques are essential.

An additional problem that books such as this encounter is the difficulty in explaining in enough detail, clinical conditions relevant to the system under discussion (for example, apraxia). Indeed a closer clinicopathological correlation in the text may have enhanced sections of this book, and overall more attention to clinical detail would have been welcome. This also applies to the exercises at the end of each chapter. The idea of including case studies at the end of each chapter is an excellent one, but it is unfortunately marred by the fact that the earlier chapters do not contain enough detail in their answers. The increased understanding that the book gives can be used to re-analyse the earlier case studies, but the reader is thwarted by the lack of clinical precision detailing the disorders outlined in the answers to the earlier chapters' case studies.

Overall the book therefore fails to accurately define its niche and to capture the imagination. It presents much of the information in a repetitive fashion with poor accompanying figures which frustrate. The reader is therefore left with some knowledge of the organisational features of the NS and its relevance to clinical neurology but in general is left more bemused than informed.

ROGER BARKER