BOOK REVIEWS

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Neurology of Critical Illness. By FELCO F M WIJCKICKS. (Pp 360; £82.00). Published by F A Davis Company, Philadelphia 1995. ISBN 0-8036-9316-8.

Anyone who has tried to devise the contents for a text on the diversity of neurology encountered in general medical disorders will know the difficulty. How can you make the end result directly useful for everyday clinical practice, rather than merely creating an impenetrable taxonomy? Dr Wijckicks has overcome this difficulty with distinction in his coverage of the neurological complications of both medical and surgical diseases in critically ill patients. He could not have had a better background for this task, given his work on the neurology-neurosurgery intensive care units at two giant teaching and referral centres: initially at the Massachusetts General with Allan Ropper, and more recently at the Mayo Clinic. The principal beneficiaries of this book will be neurologists and intensivists, but it also provides valuable reference for those in neurosurgery, transplantation, and neuroanaesthesia. It is a specialised, and moderately expensive textbook for specialist clinicians who look after, or consult upon, critically ill patients.

The introductory section contains two helpful practical discourses. One addresses the way in which neurological findings may be modified by various drugs used in intensive care units. The other covers the complications of the many invasive procedures undertaken in critically ill patients. All too often the decisiveness of our neurological advice is attenuated by uncertainties stemming from these two sources. The book also addresses other frequently encountered issues, including the differential diagnosis of generalised weakness, the diagnosis and management of seizures in critically ill patients, and brain death. Devotees of mnemonics will enjoy "MUSCLES", an aide memoire for the differential diagnosis of weakness in critically ill patients; the "C" refers to critical illness polyneuropathy. One is often asked to speculate about prognosis and the chapter covering the outcome from various encephalopathies, or severe trauma or stroke, will usefully inform the guarded opinions we may express.

The remainder of the book is divided into two sections dealing with complications on the medical, and on the surgical intensive care units; an organisational dichotomy rarely encountered in British hospitals. The

medical section covers the expected topics succinctly and pertinently: infections, cardiac arrest, metabolic derangements, coagulation disorders, acute vasculitis, and renal and hepatic disease. The discussion of that imprecisely defined entity called septic encephalopathy is particularly useful given the sketchy treatment it receives in most books despite the readiness with which it is often diagnosed. Only one of the chapters in the surgical section will be of direct interest to neurosurgeons: spinal and head injuries are covered under multisystem trauma. The remainder of the chapters in the surgical section will be primarily of value to medical neurologists and intensivists: complications of transplantation, environmental injuries, cardiac surgery, and atherosclerotic aortic disease. There is a detailed discussion of the various spinal cord infarction syndromes which may follow disease of, or surgery to the aorta. It includes discussion of a central cord-like syndrome in addition to the standard spinal arterial territory infarcts with which most neurologists are familiar. It remains to be seen whether hypothermia, perioperative methylprednisolone, or continuous spinal fluid drainage will become fashionable amongst British vascular surgeons as prophylaxis against spinal cord injury.

F A Davis are to be congratulated on yet another superb volume in the Contemporary Neurology Series. It stands on merit alongside such familiar classics as the *Differential Diagnosis of Stupor and Coma*, the *Wernicke-Korsakoff Syndrome*, and the more recent *Guillain-Barré Syndrome*. But the publisher can only take a small part of the credit; it is Dr Wijckicks who has assembled an eloquent compendium for which he deserves thanks from all of us who foray on to intensive care units.

MICHAEL DONAGHY

Epileptic Seizures and Syndromes. Edited by P WOLF. (Pp 678 £65.00). Published by John Libbey and Co, London 1994. ISBN 0-86196-430-6.

Another book on epilepsy! While the reviewer still finds this the most fascinating of neurological subjects, there seems a real danger that this subject is currently being published to death! This volume consists of some 66 chapters, some of which are repetitive, and many of which have been published in slightly different guises elsewhere. The large number of chapters, the lack of coherent structure (some chapters have a summary, others conclusions, some both, and some neither), and the inclusion of some chapters that appear to be the product of a discussion, strongly suggest that the book is the product of a symposium with the speakers and discussants asked to turn up with their manuscript in hand! The introduction does not, however, acknowledge this.

This would very much be a book for those with a special interest in epilepsy, and indeed, it largely ignores the broader aspects of epilepsy to concentrate on the more severe epilepsy syndromes and their classification. At times, some of the authors appear irritatingly naive about epilepsy as it exists outside tertiary referral centres. The same publishers have recently brought out

a multi-author book on the idiopathic generalised epilepsies, and the same authors largely repeat their previous clinical contributions, while other chapters in this section turn out to be case reports of two or three interesting patients with unusual reflex epilepsies. The section on the partial epilepsies is broadly more useful and reflects the increasing knowledge of this semiology of this subject.

The book can claim to be a reasonably topical update of the clinical issues related to classification of seizures and syndromes but it is not a book for someone new to the subject who wants to learn something about epilepsy as it lacks a coherent structure that can be followed through. It is definitely a book to accept as a gift rather than to spend money on!

DAVID CHADWICK

The Comprehensive Management of Parkinson's Disease. Edited by A M COHEN and W J WEINER. (Pp 269; \$59.95). Published by Demos Publications, New York 1994. ISBN 0-939957-74-4.

Parkinson's disease (PD) is a common disorder that all too often is regarded as a pharmacological problem manifest as a movement disorder. The disease does though affect many parts of the nervous system and presents a multitude of problems to the patient, carer, and family only some of which respond to levodopa therapy. This short book is therefore a welcome account on the management of PD, as it concentrates on all aspects of the disease. As it states in the preface the book "is written for the entire range of health care practitioners who deal with patients with PD, for the patient themselves, and for their caregivers and family members." As a result of this approach, however, the book does have some difficulty in addressing its audience, in that parts of the book are too technical for the patient, carer or family (for example, chapter 1 on the principles of rehabilitation) whilst other chapters are clearly written more for the patient than medical specialist (for example, chapter 8 on driving and PD). Furthermore the book is clearly written for a United States audience and so sections of this book have only limited appeal, for example the last two chapters which deal with financial and legal issues as well as local and national support services.

The topics that are represented in this book provide interesting insights into all aspects of this disease, and is especially good at dealing with issues not normally considered by neurologists—for example, swallowing and communication difficulties. At times the discussion does get confused in distinguishing between the problems of elderly patients and those with PD, who admittedly are normally elderly. However there are many useful tips that one can glean from this book—for example, the use of shoes with heels in patients with retropulsion. The difficulty though, of choosing less mainstream topics to discuss, is that there is a paucity of work to refer to during the discussion which means that reference lists tend to be short, dated and in rather obscure journals. Furthermore the discussion often lacks critical analysis and thus the chapters can