CORRECTION

Migraine J Neurol Neurosurg Psychiatry 1996;60:338;1996;60:448. These two listed publications were inadvertently not attributed. They were written by Dr E M R Critchley, affiliation as given in the third in the series, this volume (1996;60:584).

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 Psychological Society or 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). For Exemplars (i.e. Exemplar stating card number, expiry date, and your full name.


"Inevitably the disease progresses, but one must never give in too quickly, neither the sufferer nor the helper, who must always be quick with encouragement since success breeds success." (p545). So writes the wife of a patient with motor neuron disease (MND) at the end of this book dedicated to his disease. A moving account that not only reveals what the disease means at the personal level to both the patient and family but also serves as an encouragement to those involved in the research and management of this most feared of neurological diseases. This fear for many years reflected our ignorance, but MND is now currently yielding some of its secrets with the advent of modern molecular genetics and families of neurotrophic factors. This book therefore appears at an appropriate time.

This book primarily concentrates on the pathology, pathogenesis and treatment of MND, and covers the ground well, some what repetitively at times—for example, inclusion body pathology is discussed in chapters 4, 5 and 7 at least! However, in a field that is currently moving at speed, the book can clearly be seen to be dated, irrespective of the obvious comments in the text (for example, p230 “Since this chapter was first submitted for publication in 1989, . . .”). It is therefore not surprising that some topics are already in need of revision including: discussion of the SMA gene; the role of glial cell-line derived neurotrophic factor (GDNF) in motor neuron survival; the results of clinical trials using neurotrophic factors in MND; the significance of anti-GM1 antibodies in MND and motor neuropathies and the future of riluzole therapy, to name but some recent developments.

The updating of chapters with some of this new information has been tackled by some authors, by the tagging on of relevant information. This sadly fails and in the majority of cases as the overall discussion of the chapter does not necessarily fit naturally with the new points raised by recent research. A better approach to try and tackle this delay in conception of the book to publication may have been to include an epilogue detailing recent developments as well as providing an introduction outlining the developmental history of motor neuron diseases. This will channel their organisation into central neural pathways. This latter topic is taken up in chapters 4 and 13, but an account earlier on would have put discussion in later chapters of the book into a clearer context.

Furthermore chapter 13 on the somatic motor neurons and descending motor pathways (a 72 page chapter), seemed out of place in its discussion and attention to a neuranatomical detail in a book that has as its main topic a diffuse neurodegenerative process. Indeed, the individual biases of authors is always difficult to accommodate in a single author book. This book is not an in-depth discussion of the chapter on theories of causation, Appel et al emphasise the evidence for an autoimmune basis to MND. This in itself is not a bad thing but does rather detract from other topics and appears to be rather isolated and may unduly distort the field to the reader who simply reads this chapter in isolation.

Overall the book represents an impressive body of work relating to MND, but chapters on the cognitive deficits in this condition and the role of anti-GM1 antibodies in distinguishing MND and multifocal motor neuropathy with conduction block would have been welcome. However, the authors are extremely well referenced, and issues are dealt with that are often skipped over by books of this type—for example, the chapters on the management of MND and the concluding chapter from the spouse of a patient with MND being notable examples. It is therefore a book which serves to summarise a complex and evolving field, and although that summary is somewhat dated it is not without relevance and importance to the neurologist’s current management of this disease.

ROGER BARKER


This text book has 344 pages of fairly small print, which is well laid out and beautifully illustrated. It also contains a large amount of information in tabulated form. The material is set out in 12 chapters covering the common neurological syndromes and investigations. This book is comprehensive in its approach. This may appeal to some of its intended readers . . . medical students, house officers and non-neurologist practitioners. For others, its detailed, all-embracing, comprehensive format may impede its comprehension. In general this group of readers requires more help in the identification of common, important, day-to-day neurology, from the large mass of rare conditions which are the responsibility of the neurologist specialist. The textbook may attract young neurologists in the early stages of their training.

IAN WILKINSON

NOTICE

Announcement from the British Neuro-psychiatry Association: 1996 summer meeting

The 1996 Summer Meeting will be held on 14-16 July at Robinson College, Cambridge. It will include topics on neurodevelopment, language, and the presentation of short scientific papers and single case videos by members. The Association’s AGM will be held on 16 July.

For further details of these meetings please contact: Sue Garratt, Administrative Assistant, BNPA, 17 Clocktowers Mews, London N1 7BB. Telephone/Fax: 0171 226 5949.

For details of membership of the BNPA, which is open to medical practitioners in psychiatry, neurology, and related clinical neurosciences, please contact: Dr Jonathan Bird, Secretary BNPA, Burden Neurological Hospital, Stoke Lane, Stapleton, Bristol, BS16 1QT. Telephone: 01179 701212 ext 2925/2929 or Sue Garratt at the address given above.