Attention is especially the domain of neurology. To the scientist this is a highly complex issue. Many new concepts with diffuse messengers such as nitric oxide and possibly carbon monoxide are emerging. This is in the context of synaptic modulation, which is now no longer tenable in the light of recent demonstrations of the existence of heteroreceptors at the synapse. Furthermore the cholinergic system is now complicated by the fact that there is heterogeneity of nicotinic acetylcholine receptors (at least in the brain), to complement the known diversity of muscarinic receptors.

Finally, many factors conventionally thought of as being hormones are increasingly being found to have a neurotransmitter function or at least an ability to modulate neuronal synaptic transmission. Such factors include the corticosteroids and adrenaline, ACTH and angiotensin. The book therefore presents much information that the clinician would find new, and which many clinicians believe will be important in the future. The major difficulty that this book encounters is knowing who it is primarily written for. To the scientist working in this area, most of the data are well established and not especially challenging in content. To the clinician most of it will seem irrelevant, and the clinical slant emphasised in the later chapters does not detract from the fact that this is an excellent book on the modulation of synaptic function in animal systems. To the preclinical medical student there is too much detail without enough breadth and so other books on biophysics and pharmacology will seem more attractive. However, the final year student interested in synaptic pharmacology and physiology will find this book invaluable, as will those students embarking on research in this area. But for the majority of people this book, despite its excellent clear presentation, will remain too scientific and specialist to be of interest.

ROGER BARKER


Attentional processing is the most elusive of all our cognitive abilities. We must select from the flood of information potentially available to awareness, or, George Eliot's memorable exaggeration, we would "hear the grass grow and the squirrel's heart beat and die of that roar that lies on the other side of silence". Were you aware of the shoe encasing your left foot until you read this? If the focus of our attention determines our experience, the processes which direct it must be of key importance to the economy of mind and brain.

LaBerge, lucidly and cleverly, helpfully distinguishes the goals, expression, mechanism and control of attention. Its goals range from the enhancement of speed and accuracy of response to maintaining a state of rapt contemplation (LaBerge remarks glumly that we "find it difficult to frame a justification for this use of attention in contemplative terms"). It is expressed by amplified signals in one or several brain areas, which can facilitate thoughts and actions as well as perception. Its mechanisms revolve around the superior colliculus and thalamocortical interactions. Its control resides in prefrontal areas, in particular the dorsolateral and ventrolateral prefrontal and anterior cingulate cortices.

The first half of the book is devoted to the experimental and clinical psychology of attention, the second to its neurobiology. The early chapters might have benefited from a more systematic account of the relevant experiments, and illustration of the main visual tasks might have spoken more clearly than text. But overall the monograph is highly informative and very readable. LaBerge does full justice to the neurobiological, behavioural and subjective complexities of attention.

ADAM ZEIMAN


This book is clearly and succinctly expresses what is known about the condition through the personal experience of the author, whose main interest is in and through the extensive publications cited, amply supported by many references. These of sources would recommend the book to those who see and treat patients with trigenmal neuralgia, or who have an interest in answering the various questions which remain. For the former there is much sound advice based on personal experience and in such matters as the need to inform patients on the choices of treatment through counselling and information leaflets. For the latter there are some intriguing questions to be answered, such as why the condition is much more common on the right side than the left and which seem strange for a condition which we all still regard as ideopathic. I highly recommend this book.

ROBIN ILLINGWORTH


Workers in the field of surgical disorders of the peripheral nerves have been waiting for some time for a comprehensive account of the work of Dr David Kline of New Orleans and Dr Alan Hudson of Toronto. Now at last we have this considerable work from them both concerned principally with the results of operation, and in particular with the results of operations done at Louisiana State University Medical Center and related hospitals. It is very gratifying to dedicate the memory of Sir Sydney Sunderland. The text begins with six chapters relevant to the whole field. Then follow 11 chapters arranged topographically, some of them devoted to the brachial plexus and conditions affecting it, including thoracic


There are a number of problems with trigeminal neuralgia. Despite evidence from surgical findings that vascular compression may be relevant, the full cause remains obscure. While there are some usually characteristic there are many patients in whom the diagnosis may be difficult. The multiplicity of medications and surgical operations are testament to the fact that there is no fully satisfactory treatment. While a fairly frequent condition in neurological practice, trigeminal neuralgia is sufficiently rare for general practitioners to see only a very few cases in a lifetime.

This book clearly and succinctly expresses what is known about the condition through the personal experience of the author, whose main interest is in, and through the extensive publications cited, amply supported by many references. These of sources would recommend the book to those who see and treat patients with trigenmal neuralgia, or who have an interest in answering the various questions which remain. For the former there is much sound advice based on personal experience and in such matters as the need to inform patients on the choices of treatment through counselling and information leaflets. For the latter there are some intriguing questions to be answered, such as why the condition is much more common on the right side than the left and which seem strange for a condition which we all still regard as ideopathic. I highly recommend this book.

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At first glance, Sensory Neuropathies might appear as a tad arcane, a clinical topic not commonly troubling the jobbing neurologist. And a “Book of the Meeting” format, papers ranging from “Morphometry in greater auricular nerve” to “Including paroxysmal nocturnal hemoglobinuria,” may lead one to believe this tome’s contents are aimed at the specialist, perhaps the busy clinician seeking to wrap one’s head around a condition, or the scientist in a lab wishing to understand the boundaries of particular mechanisms. While the authors are well known as speculative as well as operative masters and thus consideration of the mechanisms of sensitivity and of pain, of the role of the muscle spindles and of the pathology of the outlet syndrome is perhaps a little thin, it might have been better to give “iatrogenic” lesions a separate chapter to distinguish them in the various sections, but they are all there anyway. Some may have hoped for a more rigorous approach to injection injuries, but the possibility of such an approach is at any rate adumbrated. None of these criticisms detracts in any way from the value of a great piece of work, and one feels, that gratitude owed to the authors and their associates by peripheral neurologists and neurosurgeons all over the world.

GEORGE BONNEY


This short volume of 352 pages is the second part of volume 1, being preceded by The Genetics of Psychiatric Disease, and taken together with volumes 1 and 2, these two volumes cover the contribution of epidemiological methods to genetics research, environment and gene-environment interactions on the expression of mental disorders throughout the lifespan, the most of which will increase enormously over the next decade.

This volume sets the current scene with contributions from the international academic community and covers adolescence and adulthood, including late life.

Brian Cooper’s review of epidemiology and of cognitive decline is wide ranging and excellent. The second chapter provides a useful introduction to the area of psychiatric disease and physical illness—the domain of the increasingly recognised specialisation of liaison psychiatry. The section on epidemiological evidence for the association of physical illness and psychiatric disorder is short and would have benefited from a table systematically reviewing methodology. The discussion on sample bias and whether association indicates causation is thorough and useful. Berkson’s bias, which is the likelihood of psychiatric disorder being identified simply because individuals are already under scrutiny by the health service is under discussed. The contributions of psychiatric disorders in physical illness for health service allocation was interesting but we really need to see trials prove that such intervention would improve outcome.

Well...there are good things in the book. Sensory neuropathies are not so rare—certainly not at the meeting in Seattle and read and after his death before the Sunderland Society of Seattle.

The book is illustrated throughout with numerous photographs, some pages of colour prints, which are both admirable and clear; equally instructive are the numerous drawings by Eugene New, the modern Leonardo of medical illustration. The material is comprehensive, bearing all the signs of its origin from authors with immense practical experience, thoroughly familiar with all aspects of their subject.

Of particular interest to aficionados of brachial plexus surgery is the use in 18 cases of the posterolateral approach to the plexus, facilitating exposure of the most proximal part of the root and avoiding an approach through a region scarred by injury or by previous operation. The particular advantages of this approach in gunshot wounds of the plexus, in which Dr Kline has unrivalled experience, is stressed. As the sub-title implies, the book is concerned with the gross and microscopic pathology of lesions, clinical features, operative findings, techniques and results. Some of the ideas and methods are familiar; some are new; all are well tried. It is a heroic achievement to have done all this work and to have analysed and presented it in a form so well ordered and readable. All those working in this field should have this book as a constant companion; all those working in adjacent fields should know where to lay hands on a copy.

As a matter of form it is necessary to make some criticisms. A rather weighty criticism is that both authors are well known as speculative as well as operative masters and thus consideration of the mechanisms of sensitivity and of pain, of the role of the muscle spindles and of the pathology of the outlet syndrome is perhaps a little thin; it might have been better to give “iatrogenic” lesions a separate chapter to distinguish them in the various sections, but they are all there anyway. Some may have hoped for a more vigorous approach to injection injuries, but the possibility of such an approach is at any rate adumbrated. None of these criticisms detracts in any way from the value of a great piece of work, and one feels that gratitude owed to the authors and their associates by peripheral neurologists and neurosurgeons all over the world.

GEORGE BONNEY

In the chapter on post-traumatic stress disorder a large number of prevalence studies are discussed. Some of these quoted are clearly fascinating, such as those which, because they are population based, could examine genuinely unselected veterans and identify early factors which predicted combat exposure. More discussion of the biases which might arise when conducting this kind of study would have been welcome.

The primary focus of the fourth chapter, including all the familiar filters into health care, whilst indicating that this does not necessarily apply in all health provision settings. The emphasis is laid on the importance of improved care for those injured in primary care and the benign prognosis of most of these disorders. This seems to be a paradoxical message, which at a time when community care of the more severe end of the spectrum is under scrutiny, is puzzling.

The chapter on affective disorder provides a thorough overview of the themes in epidemiological affective disorders, for those not familiar with this area, cohort effects being stressed. The chapter is summarised: the early identification of early onset is stressed. As the sub-title implies, the book is concerned with the gross and microscopic pathology of lesions, clinical features, operative findings, techniques and results. Some of the ideas and methods are familiar; some are new; all are well tried. It is a heroic achievement to have done all this work and to have analysed and presented it in a form so well ordered and readable. All those working in this field should have this book as a constant companion; all those working in adjacent fields should know where to lay hands on a copy.

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