

BOOK REVIEWS

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Status Epilepticus. By SIMON SHORVON. (Pp 382; £55.00 H/b.) Published by Cambridge University Press, Cambridge: 1994. ISBN 0-521-42065-2

This thoroughly researched and concise text succeeds admirably in achieving its stated aim of providing a definitive text on status epilepticus. Early chapters provide a fascinating historical account of the subject and tackle head on the difficult problems of definition and classification in some detail. The author proposes a new classification of status epilepticus based on clinical features including age and underlying epilepsy syndrome in addition to traditional divisions according to seizure type. The wider application of this approach to research in status epilepticus would undoubtedly advance understanding of clinical features and prognosis in those epilepsy syndromes (particularly in childhood) in which status occurs. Forms of status other than generalised tonic clonic status epilepticus certainly have been neglected and this book should bring the clinical phenomenology associated with these to a wider audience. Clinical forms of status epilepticus are described in detail. Although full treatment of pseudo status epilepticus may have been outside the author's intention in writing this book this is a significant practical problem much under recognised in clinical practice. Practitioners unused to dealing with intractable epilepsy would benefit from a fuller review of the management of these difficult patients.

The book adopts an approach throughout of identifying status as a condition in its own right with clinical and pathophysiological features distinctive from isolated recurrent epileptic seizures. Sections covering the neurophysiology, pathology, and chemistry of status epilepticus highlight the importance of this approach and indicate a necessity for further research to improve understanding in these areas.

Advice on treatment is given in an easily accessible and clear form, including practical advice on drug administration, appropriate monitoring, and complications. The sum-

mary of drug treatment for status should be placed adjacent to that for general measures in the text. The various antiepileptic drugs used in both Europe and the United States for status are reviewed in some detail. It is clear that further rigorous studies of the effectiveness, complication rate, and eventual outcome of treatment with different drugs are urgently needed. The difficulties of performing research in this area should no longer be seen as an excuse by the neurological community for the absence of rigorous comparative trials. Data on outcome are unsatisfactory and incomplete but it is clear that significant morbidity and mortality arise from the late diagnosis and incomplete treatment of this condition.

This excellent text provides a thorough introduction to the subject of status epilepticus and should find a place in both the emergency room and neurology ward.

STEVE WROE

Medical Rehabilitation of Traumatic Brain Injury. Edited by L J HORN and N D ZASLER. (Pp 642). Published by Mosby, St Louis. 1996. ISBN 1560530707.

This book provides an excellent compendium of medically oriented information about clinical assessment and management of traumatic brain injury. The emphasis is on adults although there is a chapter on children. In the first half of the book, headed Continuum of Care, there are useful chapters on early management, severe impairment, functional assessment, and medicolegal aspects. In the second part of the book all the important medical topics are covered adequately. In books of this sort (and there are several) one looks nervously for wild assertions about relatively marginal topics such as the use of EEG in assessment, or the use of psychoactive drugs in management. Two chapters on neurophysiological investigation provide useful reviews without overstatement, and the author of the chapter on neuropharmacology clearly inhabits the real world, in which pharmacological specificities are interesting, and sometimes promising, but rarely definitive. Other authors, by and large, have adopted equally pragmatic approaches to their topics. The reference lists for most chapters include a fair proportion of citations which are less than three years old. The general standard of the book and of its index are a credit to its editors. This book promises to be a useful source of reference.

One might quibble about the title: Can there be *medical* rehabilitation, as distinct from the multidisciplinary process? For that matter, should we speak about rehabilitation of traumatic brain injury as though rehabilitation could be applied, like plaster of paris? The contents of this book, and its list of authors, would suggest that medical rehabilitation is a cut and dried medical speciality unconcerned with nebulous activities such as physiotherapy, or for that matter psy-

chotherapy. And yet no distinction can be made in practice between medical and non-medical rehabilitation. The essence of rehabilitation is a subtle process of behavioural change involving the injured person, the family, and a number of professionals including physicians. It is difficult to capture this process in a textbook and still more difficult to represent the varying ways in which physicians need to be involved.

CHRIS WARD

History of Mental Symptoms. Edited by GERMAN E BERRIOS. (Pp 565; price £40.00 (paperback).) 1996. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. ISBN 0-521-43736-9.

This is an important book. It has been produced by one of the leading experts in the history of psychiatry and the quality of its scholarship reflects that background. It is unique in that, to my knowledge, it is the first comprehensive review of the history of psychopathology *per se*. Quite appropriately the author goes to some trouble in his opening section to define psychopathology, distinguish the history of psychopathology from the history of psychiatry and its treatments, with the result that the ground is laid for a subsequent and very thorough exploration of the history of public and professional views of a range of disturbances of human experience and behaviour.

The main body of the book is made up of a series of chapters each of which traces the historical development of an area of psychopathology into the form that would be familiar to a contemporary clinician. These include Disorders of Perception, Delusions, Obsessions and Compulsions, Anxiety and Cognate Disorders, Feelings of Fatigue and 14 other areas of recognisable psychopathology. The result is a useful reference book which enables the reader to readily review the historical development of concepts and phenomena commonly used in every clinical practice and research. The result is a rewarding and considerably enriching experience.

This arrangement no doubt reflects the book's origins in a series of lectures and papers developed over a number of years, eventually encompassing the whole range of psychopathological phenomena. It strengthens the value of the book as a landmark work of reference, the scholarship of which is undoubtedly excellent and which is illustrated by the authors' reference to "two centuries of French, German, Italian, Spanish and British primary sources. Due to my ignorance of Eastern European languages, . . ." at the beginning of the preface.

Berrios' *History of Mental Symptoms* should find a place in the library of everyone with more than a utilitarian interest in psychopathology. The one major limitation is that in general, sources are restricted to the last two centuries, and earlier sources have yet to be researched. Perhaps such work will form the basis of a sequel.

HUGH MIDDLETON