Radiology of stroke

The optimum time frame for imaging embolic infarcts for stigmata of haemorrhagic transformation should have merited discussion under the heading “special clinical circumstances,” not least because of conflicting evidence about the benefits versus risks of early anticoagulation in the context of unpredictable evolution of embolic infarcts with or without anticoagulant treatment. In a study comprising 30 patients with cardio- genic cerebral embolism, three patients with an initially non-haemorrhagic cerebral infarct, visualized by computed tomography within 12 hours of stroke onset, showed asymptomatic haemorrhagic transformation in the absence of anticoagulant treatment 2–8 days later. One other patient in this subgroup did, however, develop sudden worsening of haemiparesis despite having initially presented with a small infarct. Among 1457 patients anticoagulated with unfractionated heparin in the presence of embolic cerebral infarct associated with atrial fibrillation, haemorrhagic transformation (within 14 days) was significantly commoner (p < 0.0001) than in their non-heparinised counterparts. Ischaemic stroke recurred with a 4.9% frequency in the latter subgroup (comprising 1612 patients) during that time frame, and this complication was significantly less common (p = 0.001) in their anti-coagulated counterparts. Anti-coagulation in the presence of haemorrhagic transformation has been advocated as being without risk on the basis of the outcome in 12 patients so treated, but the caveat is that, in another study also involving patients with embolic stroke, the subsequent development of haemorrhagic transformation in 5 of 231 patients anticoagulated with heparin was associated with significant clinical deterioration. It is this unpredictability in the consequences and tempo of haemorrhagic transformation and in the impact of early anticoagulation on this phenomenon that causes anxiety among clinicians at all levels of experience.

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References
1 Wardlaw JM. Radiology of stroke. J Neurol Neurosurg Psychiatry 2001;70(suppl 1):ii7–11

Thunderclap headache, reversible cerebral arterial vasoconstriction, and unruptured aneurysms

In his comprehensive review of thunderclap headache, Dr Dodick discusses two patients with the triad of thunderclap headache, cerebral arterial vasoconstriction, and unruptured cerebral aneurysms. We recently reported on two very similar patients, in whom the symptoms developed shortly after exposure to commonly used serotonin enhancing drugs. The interrelation between thunderclap headache, cerebral arterial vasoconstriction, and unruptured aneurysms is not clear, and in these four patients the aneurysms may well have been incidental findings. However, it is interesting that, in addition to segmental vasoconstriction, cerebral angiograms in patients with the Call-Fleming and some other vasoconstriction syndromes can have areas of vasodilatation beyond the normal diameter of the artery. Moreover, patients with stroke associated with the use of vasoconstrictive drugs such as cocaine and “ecstasy” are known to have an unusually high number of aneurysms. It is conceivable that patients who develop cerebral vasoconstriction or thunderclap headaches (without subarachnoid haemorrhage) are more likely to harbour aneurysms due to primary or drug induced abnormalities of vessel tone.

Dr Dodick reviews cases where thunderclap headache was associated with unruptured aneurysms, without cerebral arterial vasoconstriction, and where thunderclap headache was associated with vasoconstriction, without unruptured aneurysms. It should be noted that unruptured aneurysm is not associated with vasoconstriction, without thunderclap headache. This point is emphasised by an additional, hitherto unpublished case (courtesy Dr C Miller Fisher) of severe cerebral vasoconstriction, stroke, and death associated with two unruptured and asymptomatic intracerebral aneurysms without thunderclap headache. The patient, a 65 year old woman, was admitted in January 1998 with probable Guillin-Barré syndrome. The hospital course was notable for episodic hypertension (maximum blood pressure 200/100 mm Hg). On day 4, she developed cortical blindness, abulia, aphasia, and right hemiplegia. Computed tomography showed infarctions in both occipital lobes and a parasagittal meningioma. A selective cerebral arteriogram showed aneurysms in the anterior communicating and left middle cerebral artery, severe attenuation of proximal intracranial arteries, and “sausaging” of distal arteries. After returning from the arteriogram the patient became obtunded, then deteriorated, clinically, and died on day 13. A necropsy showed cerebral oedema with bilateral temporal lobe herniations, infarctions in the inferior cerebral and both occipital and frontal lobes, a parasagittal meningioma, and two unruptured aneurysms (a 5 x 5 mm anterior communicating aneurysm and a 10 x 7 mm left middle cerebral artery aneurysm). There was no evidence for arterial inflammation. Lympohocytic infiltration was present in the sciatric nerves, consistent with infectious polyneuritis. As stated in the review article, it is difficult to account for any mechanism whereby the aneurysms may have precipitated the vasoconstriction.

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Author’s reply

I would like to thank Dr Singhal for his interest and thoughtful insights concerning the review article on thunderclap headache. I will address his comments in order.
Cochlear implantation in a profoundly deaf patient with MELAS syndrome

In response to the article “Cochlear implantation in a profoundly deaf patient with MELAS syndrome” (mitochondrial myopathy, encephalopathy, lactic acidosis, and stroke-like episodes), we feel concerned that this patient may have a different diagnosis. This woman who received a cochlear implant is described as having the MELAS syndrome, in both the title and the text. However, she has less severe maternally inherited diabetes mellitus with deafness (MIDD) syndrome. She has the A3243G point mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) mutation associated with insulin dependent diabetes mellitus, congenital cataracts, short stature, leg weakness, fatigue, and sensorineural hearing loss (SNHL), with no encephalopathy or strokes. The age of onset of SNHL was 22 years, with a slow deterioration to right profound SNHL at the age of 29 years, and bilateral profound SNHL and tinnitus at the age of 30 years.

Caloric testing and computed tomography of her temporal bones were both normal. Her mother suffered from diabetes, glaucoma, and a lesser degree of SNHL, and a sister has profound SNHL and mental retardation.

MELAS is a multisystem disorder with a wide variety of phenotypic clinical features. Among these multiple features, the diagnostic criteria for MELAS are as follows:• Stroke-like episodes before age 40 years;• Encephalopathy (seizures, dementia, or both);• Mitochondrial myopathy (lactic acidosis, ragged red muscle fibres, or both);• Two of the following three: normal early axonal reflexes;• Sensorineural hearing loss.

Now these clinical findings can be confirmed with a positive molecular genetic test for mtDNA mutations. The A3243G mutation in the mitochondrial tRNA-Lys gene, MTTL1, causes MELAS and is responsible for MELAS in 60% of cases. The A3243G mutation has been identified as the cause of MIDD in 60% of cases.

In patients with mtDNA disease, affected cells and tissues tend to harbour mixtures of mutant and wildtype mtDNA in different proportions. This is called “heteroplasmy”, as opposed to “homoplasy”, where only one type is present. It is hypothesised that phenotypic expression of mtDNA pathology may occur when heteroplasmia within an organ reaches a certain level. This concept is known as the “threshold effect”. The severity of the phenotype is thought to correlate with the degree of heteroplasmia in different tissues. Interestingly, both syndromes, MELAS and MIDD, can be found in a single pedigree with the A3243G mutation. The A3243G mutation is also associated with Kearns-Sayre syndrome. Assuming that all patients with the A3243G mutation have the MELAS syndrome leads to an incorrect diagnosis, with significant implications for patient counselling. A diagnosis of MELAS implies that the patient has developed stroke-like episodes or encephalopathy.

As more people with SNHL become genotyped and the identification of the true prevalence of mitochondrial SNHL becomes more obvious, a database of already successfully treated patients by cochlear implantation will be useful for quantitative analyses of performance of these patients with cochlear implants. Here, the correct label must be assigned to patients.

More information on mitochondrial SNHL can be obtained on the Hereditary Hearing Loss Homepage on http://www.uia.ac.be/dnlab/hhh.

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References

Author’s reply
We are grateful to Dr Sinnathuray and colleagues for their very useful comments on the precise diagnosis of our patient’s condition. We agree entirely with the comment that the A3243G mutation also occurs in maternally inherited diabetes mellitus with deafness (MIDD). In our patient the original diagnosis was made by a clinical geneticist in 1994 and therefore, in a rapidly changing field,
greater precision in diagnosis might have been possible with a further genetics consultation at a later date. We should point out that this article was originally submitted in November 2000 and this, also, may have contributed to the diagnosis of MELAS syndrome rather than Parkinson disease. We are most grateful to Dr Sinnathuray and colleagues for their useful comments.

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Bilateral lesions restricted to the posteroventral pallidum are unlikely to provoke corticobulbar syndrome and psychic akinesia

Merello et al reported a randomised study comparing bilateral simultaneous posteroventral pallidotomy (PVP) with a combination of unilateral PVP and contralateral pallidal stimulation. After having included three patients in each group, the study had to be aborted because of the severe complications encountered in the patients who had bilateral pallidotomy. This interesting paper raises some serious concerns.

First, the three patients who had bilateral PVP had a mean age of 67 years and those who had PVP and contralateral pallidal stimulation had a mean age of 55 years. This difference in age is said to be non-significant. As there are only three patients in each group it would perhaps have been more appropriate to have given the ages of the individual patients rather than the means.

Second, at three months after surgery, the patients who had bilateral PVP showed deterioration in parts I (mobility) and II (activity of daily living) of the unified Parkinson’s disease rating scale (UPDRS). The subscores of gait and postural instability worsened significantly. The patients showed deterioration in depression and apathy scores, and it was not possible to perform neuropsychological evaluation after surgery. The patients required feeding tube, their gait freezing deteriorated, and they had no benefit from increased levodopa intake. Their gait freezing deteriorated, and it was not significantly. The patients showed deterioration in daily living) of the unified Parkinson’s disease patients who had bilateral PVP showed deterioration in functional outcome following pallidotomy for Parkinson’s disease. A consecutive series of eight simultaneous bilateral and twelve unilateral procedures. Brain 1998;121:659–75.

References

Figure 1 Axial MRI scans with three month old bilateral pallidal lesion performed in the patients who underwent bilateral ablative procedures.

Author’s reply

We greatly appreciate the publication of the letter from Professor Hariz, which gives us occasion to provide more information about our paper and confirm the danger of simultaneous bilateral lesions within the GPi. We all know how limited the literature is on negative results of surgical procedures and how important they are. Surgery for Parkinson’s disease is an extremely useful tool in a certain subgroup of patients, but it is not entirely risk-free and unfortunately many of the side effects seen at the bedside are poorly represented in published reports.

On the basis of unpublished descriptions by many neurosurgeons, bilateral procedures are performed by placing a normal lesion on one side, involving as much as possible of the motor portion of the GP, followed by a smaller contralateral lesion. An excellent point arises from the concern expressed by Hariz: should both lesions be the same size? Perhaps staged asymmetric lesions could provide an alternative, but this was not the case in our report; we made simultaneous lesions which both involved as much as possible of the motor portion of the GP, and our conclusions should not be extended to other surgical contexts.

As requested, we provide MRI of our cases (fig 1) and fully agree that lesion placement is crucial, as Hariz is well aware, given his reported outcome of five of 13 patients (that is, almost 40%) who subsequently required seven further procedures, presumably because of initial lesion displacement.1 Whatever the importance of descriptive photography, we believe it was more important that non-significant statistical differences were found in lesion/stimulation placement between the groups, and clinical psychic akinesia was only present in simultaneous bilateral lesioned cases.

We are sure that Hariz must have already read a recent review by Laplane and Dubois,2 which clearly describes the psychic akinesia syndrome as a result of bilateral basal ganglia lesions, providing deep insight into the non-motor roles of the basal ganglia, such as behavioural activation, cognitive processing, affectivity, and conscious awareness, with which we fully agree.

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References
BOOK REVIEWS

Ischemic cerebrovascular disease
By Harold P Adams, Vladimir Hachinski, and John W Norris (Pp 575, £95.00). Published by Oxford University Press, New York, 2001. ISBN 0195132890

The most recent book in the very successful “black book” Contemporary neurology series from Oxford University Press is a monograph on brain ischaemia. The book is written by three experienced and well respected North American authors—Adams from the United States and Hachinski and Norris from Canada. The present monograph is a successor to a previous book entitled The acute stroke by Hachinski and Norris published 16 years ago. There are now many books on stroke and on brain ischaemia. While reading this present endeavor I continued to ponder the role of this monograph among the already burgeoning library of books. Whom is it aimed at? Who will profit most by its content? When, why, and how will readers use this book?

The text can be conveniently divided into four parts. The initial portion consists of four chapters: an introductory general chapter followed by single survey chapters on epidemiology, clinical presentation of ischaemic and transient ischaemic strokes, and imaging and laboratory evaluation of these patients. The second portion of the book consists of five descriptive chapters: four concern different syndromes: atherothrombotic strokes; non-atherosclerotic vasculopathies, cardiac sources of embolism, and prothrombotic states; the fifth chapter considers ischaemic strokes in the young. The final five chapters discuss management: medical therapy, surgical therapy, acute management of patients with ischaemic stroke, and hospital management and rehabilitation. The management section, although consisting of only five chapters, makes up 245 pages, nearly half of the 575 pages of the book.

The book has some attractive features that make it very user friendly. It is well organised. There is a detailed outline at the beginning of the book and at the beginning of each chapter. Furthermore, there are clear bold subheadings and a detailed index. These features make it quite easy to locate desired information. Tables are sprinkled amply throughout and the tables succinctly summarise key points. The book is very heavily referenced and the references are up to date. There are ample figures that illustrate well the main disorders and the main diagnostic tools. A unique feature is the inclusion of clear diagrams and figures of echocardiograms. Cardiac investigations are not usually covered nearly as well in monographs about stroke.

The most useful portion of the book is the section on management of patients with ischaemic stroke. This was the core of the predecessor of this book. Treatment discussions are practical, detailed, evidence based, and up to date. The chapter on management of patients with acute ischaemic stroke is especially well done and will be quite useful for non-neurologists and non-stroke neurologists who lead stroke treatment in hospitals and stroke units. The chapters on clinical presentation and stroke aetiologies are less successful. Except for coverage of cardiac investigations and prothrombotic states, these chapters are rather brief and general, and serve only as introductions to the subjects discussed. In the non-management chapters, the authors seek to cover the waterfront and at least mention most things neophytes and non-stroke experts would want to look up. These non-management chapters are covered much better and in more detail in other texts. The presentations are practical and are time locked to trials and results of treatment. There is little theoretical background or detailed discussions of anatomy, pathology, and pathophysiology. The attempt to cover all topics means that some are very scantily considered. The sections on vertebral artery disease, cerebellar infarction, and lacunar infarction are extremely brief. Many of the non-atherosclerotic conditions and cardioembolic sources are mentioned only in brief pithy paragraphs. Non-stroke experts would derive the barest information from the text but can look up references. Unfortunately, most references are only too brief; references to monographs and review of topics considered scantily would also have been helpful.

This book will be most useful to non-neurologists and non-stroke specialists who have the responsibility of managing patients with acute brain ischaemia acutely in emergency rooms and in hospitals. It serves as an excellent reference source concerning a wide variety of topics related to brain ischaemia, which are considered in more detail elsewhere.

Louis Caplan

The behavioral neurology of white matter
Edited by Christopher M Filley (Pp 267, £43.50). Published by Oxford University Press, New York, 2001. ISBN 019513561X

This is a single author review and is a small book of 279 pages. It is divided into three parts, the first covering the normal function, development, and imaging of white matter. The second and largest part is devoted to inspecting white matter. While the range of conditions covered is comprehensive, each condition receives from a short paragraph to a couple of pages. While the material in the second part is very complete, the book focuses on white matter, these sections do not provide any information that would not be readily accessible in standard neurological texts. The third section deals specifically with the cognitive and neurobehavioural aspects of white matter disease. An overview of the cognitive changes that may be seen is provided along with further discussion of individual syndromes but again the information provided on each syndrome is brief. Similar comments apply to the following section on psychiatric syndromes. Readers consulting the book for advice on any aspect of management will be disappointed; this is scarcely mentioned at all.

Another common issue, the selection of appropriate scales and tests for the assessment of cognitive loss, is also striking by its absence. It is difficult to see where this book will fit in; the first two sections would be better covered elsewhere. The final section provides more unusual material but even so this is brief, somewhat theoretical, and devoid of information on diagnosis or management. It may be useful as a introductory monograph for people in training entering the field.

John Bowler

Channelopathies of the nervous system

Over the past few years there has been an explosion of knowledge regarding a group of diseases that have become known as the channelopathies. Like many new chapters of medical discovery it always seems obvious in retrospect. After all, ion channels are one of the most critical structures for normal neural activity. This cascade of new knowledge has now firmly established that dysfunction of both ligand gated and voltage gated ion channels may cause human diseases. The dysfunction either may be caused by autoimmune attack, such as myasthenia gravis, or may be the result of mutations in ion channel genes, such as the skeletal muscle channelopathies. In the main, channelopathies are disorders of excitable tissues and the nervous system is of course particularly affected.

It therefore timely that Channelopathies of the nervous system should be published to provide a snap shot of current knowledge in this area. The editors state that their aim is “to inform both clinicians and neuroscientists as to the state of the art of these channelopathies, both clinically and scientifically”. I think this has been achieved through the contributions of 34 recognized authorities in various subfields of neurological channelopathies.

The foreword is particularly informative and sets the scene very well for what is to follow. In the preface the editors acknowledge that the ultimate importance of channelopathies and of ion channel dysfunction remains to be determined. It is certainly true that all the channelopathies defined to date are relatively rare diseases. However, there is of course enormous expectation that ion channel dysfunction will be important in the most common paroxysmal disorders: epilepsy and migraine. This remains unproved.

The layout of the book is logical and generally user friendly. Each chapter stands more or less alone and as expected for a multiauthor text the styles vary. The book is divided into eight main parts: basic science, assessment of channel function (in vitro and in vivo), the channel gene expression, channelopathies and potential channelopathies, central nervous system disorders, toxin induced channel disorders, and potential channel disorders. Recent genetic discoveries indicate that proximal myoton nic myopathy and Schwartz-Jampel syndromes have in fact both bitten the dust as potential channelopathies! I found the chapters on the central nervous system disorders especially readable although already out of date in what is such a rapidly expanding area.

This is one of the first texts on this subject and I can recommend it to interested neurologists and neuroscientists.

Michael Hanna

Disorders of voluntary muscle
7th edn

It is estimated that at least one in 500 people will be affected by specific genetic or other lifelong neuromuscular disorders. Inevitably
Several of the dystrophies, congenital myopathies, and, of course, the inflammatory myopathies are covered in some detail, each in separate sections. These are, generally speaking, up to date and provide, in particular, a good account of the recent advances in the molecular genetics, particularly of the dystrophies. The section on mitochondrial disorders is also comprehensive and provides a useful algorithm for assessment of patients with possible mitochondrial disease. It is the section on the so-called primary myopathies that will probably be most used by generalists, including both neurologists and rheumatologists. The section written by Dalakas and Karpati is excellent and provides a comprehensive overview of the clinical, morphological, aetiological, and therapeutic aspects of these disorders. In particular, the discussion of the involvement of muscle in other inflammatory disorders is helpful. My only suggestion might have been an algorithm to help guide clinicians in the treatment of these disorders.

Genetic counselling in muscle diseases has now become a critically important area. Therefore, the chapter by the latter is very welcome. This sets out clearly the approach that clinicians should take to achieving a diagnosis and to counselling patients and relatives with the various types of inherited muscle disease. I imagine that this particular chapter will find its way in some easily accessible form into the clinician drawer.

Finally, the last chapter deals with practical management issues in patients with muscle disease. This is clearly a very important area for patients who sadly often progress inexorably and require an increasing degree of help from carers and the medical profession as each year passes. It is one of the most important areas for managing patients with muscle disease and it is pleasing that this has been covered in some detail.

Where do the faults lie? In reality, none of my criticisms are anything but quibbles. Some of the sections seem a little superficial but inevitably this must reflect the constraint of chapter size in what must be intended to be a single volume. The course other texts with which this will have to compete. Both Myology by Engel and Franzini-Armstrong and Neuromuscular disorders by Katirji et al are also excellent texts covering a similar range of topics. Needless to say, they are all pretty hefty tomes and the reader will have to select which of these suits him or her best. The latest Disorders of voluntary muscle must rank alongside the other top texts in this area.

Anthony Schapira

Clinical guidelines in old age psychiatry


This book is timely in outlining the current state of knowledge on these disorders from a psychopharmacological perspective and in aiming to give clinicians practical advice on the use of medication in this age group. It draws on knowledge—mainly from the adult literature—on underlying neurobiological processes. It gives an overview of neurotransmitters involved, the mechanisms of action, and side effect profiles of various drugs available. The research evidence for efficacy and practical advice is given on the use of medication. Families are becoming better informed about different child psychiatric treatments and they may be expected to be offered treatment choices based on the evidence. This book will be helpful to clinicians when considering the indications and contraindications of medication as part of clinical interventions.

Elena Garrola
Neurological eponyms

I enjoyed this book. It is one to delve into rather than read formally. It appears to have had a rather long gestation since the introduction is dated September 1999. The book is separated into five sections though at times the inclusion of a particular chapter in a particular section seems somewhat arbitrary. The editors have aimed for a uniformity of approach in which a brief historical survey is followed by a resume of the original description and then a listing of that description in a modern context. Inevitably the quality and interest of the contributions vary considerably. The chapters are well illustrated with both portraits of the person and, where relevant, illustrations from original descriptions. In general the editing has been thorough though curiously the chapter on Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease ends with a paragraph covering data that had been previously discussed in the middle of the text. Some authors chose not to question the appropriateness of the attribution of a particular syndrome or sign to a particular person; others do so sometimes amusingly as, for example, in the chapter on William Gochnour on Horner’s syndrome. There is little to quibble with in terms of the attributions, though why on earth cluster headache is entitled Horton’s syndrome is not entirely clear to this reviewer. Although Horton himself had the temerity to suggest that the specific type of headache he described in 1939 had not been described adequately in the literature, he clearly had not read Wilfred Harris’s contributions published in Neuritis and neuralgia in 1926 and later in The facial neuralgias in 1937. Harris described virtually all the characteristic features of cluster headache including distribution, periodicity, duration, frequency, presence of conjunctival injection and lacrimation, the sometimes associated Horner’s syndrome, and the response to subcutaneous ergotamine. So much for a headache that had not been described adequately in the literature.

My only concern about this book is that the publishers, who seem now to be publishing as frequently from New York as from Oxford, seem to have acquired a taste for American spelling. Perhaps they need a visit down the road at Oxford to the OED.

David Perkin

Arachnoiditis: the silent epidemic

This book provides a comprehensive analysis, and comments on a condition we hope will be significantly reduced in incidence with new investigative tools. It provides an extensive bibliography providing reference on the views expressed, the likely multifactorial aetiological factors responsible for the development of a very disabling combination of signs and symptoms, and management strategies. The earlier chapters provide a historical perspective together with relevant anatomical, pathological, and physiological information, which will be useful to the reader while reading the later chapters. Although the book discusses predominantly the spinal arachnoiditis, it also covers important cranial subdivisions of the condition, in addition to associated conditions such as syringomyelia. There is an interesting section on questionable causes of arachnoiditis, which are very relevant because the previously predominantly attributable injection of foreign materials into the intrathecal compartment of the spine for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes—are no longer used or are regarded with circumspection. The further sections relate to the thorny question of diagnosis, which is extremely difficult, and to the limited treatment options available. Arachnoiditis is a condition that would be better prevented than treated. Unfortunately, the prognosis remains bleak for these patients but the management strategies in dealing with multiple concerns faced by such patients are well described. The senior author is to be congratulated on producing a single volume, based on some eighty thousand references, and his undoubted unique experience of dealing with hundreds of such cases, which is a unique contribution to our body of knowledge.

It is salutary reading for some of the more senior members of our profession and will provide guidance to the younger members. It is a useful book for anyone treating patients with this awful disease and it can provide guidance to those involved in dealing with patient complaints or litigation. The book provides both philosophical and scientific viewpoints.

J Van Dellen

Texture of the nervous system of man and the vertebrates, volume II

This is the second of three projected volumes that present for the first time in English one of the great classics of microscopical anatomy: Santiago Ramón y Cajal’s Texture of the nervous system, which first appeared in Spanish in 1904. The Texture and Sherrington’s integrative activity of the nervous system, which appeared in 1906, are the two fundamental works from which modern neurological science grew. Hitherto, the Texture was available only in the original Spanish and in the somewhat enlarged French edition of 1911, reprinted in 1952.

This new edition is important, not only because it makes Ramón y Cajal’s contribution widely accessible, but also because the translators have gone back to the original illustrations, which are preserved in the Museum of the Instituto Cajal in Madrid. The high quality of the paper compared with that of earlier editions means that much detail is now visible that was formerly obscure. This is well shown by comparing the section of the medulla and cerebellum in figure 238 from the present volume with figure 78 in volume II of the French edition: the beautiful cellular detail is simply not visible in the latter.

Modern investigators have further in the debt of the patient for the work being provided (and almost always checked) the full references cited by Cajal, correcting errors that had escaped his attention, and annotating the text sparingly but helpfully when modern research had clarified issues that remained unclear to him. The book is beautifully produced and pleasant to hold in the hand.

Ramón y Cajal’s work is as central to neurological research today as it was century ago. The translators and publishers deserve our gratitude for bringing this essential work to a new generation of readers.

W I McDonald

Clinical evaluation and management of spasticity

This is a useful and interesting book. It is increasingly recognised that several treatment strategies can be beneficial in the management of spasticity, particularly using more recent drugs such as tizanidine and botulinum toxin. The book is a comprehensive review of the subject. No important topics are missed although the length and thoroughness of the chapters do vary to a significant degree.

The book opens with a brief chapter on the physiology and pharmacology of spasticity. Although the book is targeted towards a clinical audience, and as such is a practical textbook, it is a pity that this opening chapter is so brief with regard to the neurophysiology of spasticity. An understanding of the underlying principles is important for logical treatment. Alex Dromerick produces a good chapter covering the clinical features of spasticity and a brief resume of complications. This is followed by an excellent chapter on the standard pharmacological interventions (benzodiazepines) are thoroughly covered in the chapter on alternative pharmacological therapies. Nerve blocks, botulinum toxin, and intrathecal medications are adequately covered. The chapter by Mary Keenan and Patrick McNicholas on orthopaedic interventions for the management of limb deformities in spasticity is the best chapter on this subject I have ever read and certainly should be compulsory reading for the physician who may need to refer to surgical colleagues for the management of complex and drug resistant spasticity.

The problem with these early chapters is that they lack an overall strategic approach to the patient with spasticity. The editors have tried to correct this problem with the last four chapters in the book, which give individual views of the management of spasticity in children with cerebral palsy and in adults with multiple sclerosis, traumatic brain injury, and spinal cord injury. These are useful chapters that bring the rest of the book together, although there is some rather unavoidable repetition. A few illustrative case histories might have been useful in this section.
Overall this is a thorough, reasonably comprehensive, well referenced, and up to date textbook, which can be recommended to the multidisciplinary spasticity team and is a useful reference for any neurologist.

*Michael Barnes*

**Autoantibodies in neurological diseases**


Antineuronal antibodies were initially described 40 years ago and since then many autoantibodies have been discovered and characterised. Despite this, there is a limited number of texts devoted to the subject of autoantibodies in neurological diseases. Even less common are books that describe autoantibodies and clinical-immunological associations in a manner useful to both clinicians and investigators. This book fills the void. Although the title evokes a laundry list of antibodies this edition offers an even balance between clinical descriptions, immunological mechanisms, and therapeutic implications. The inevitable overlap of topics in a multiauthored book is kept to minimum. An introductory chapter on techniques used for measuring and evaluating the pathogenic role of autoantibodies will be useful for clinicians not directly involved in laboratory research. Subsequent chapters comprehensively cover disorders of the neuromuscular junction and peripheral nerve and less extensively disorders of the central nervous system associated either with autoantibodies or with other evidence of autoimmunity. Among the latter are chapters on autoantibodies and epilepsy and vasculitis of the central nervous system, topics rarely encountered in other texts. Two chapters on autoimmunity and pregnancy, particularly in association with myasthenia gravis, nicely discuss the effects of immunity on the embryo and newborn. With the exception of disorders associated with antibodies to gangliosides that are not discussed, descriptions of most of the recently described paraneoplastic and non-cancer related autoantibodies, as well as possible pathogenic mechanisms, are up to date and clear. A chapter on the ontogeny of skeletal muscle cells, although well written, is out of place in this text. The book is well edited and illustrated and the references are thorough. The focus of the text is weighted towards disorders of the peripheral nervous system, likely reflecting the more extensive literature on these disorders. Clinicians and basic investigators in neurology and immunology will find this book an excellent resource.

*Joseph Dalmau*

**CORRECTIONS**

Goertler M, Blaser T, Krueger S, et al. Cessation of embolic signs after antithrombotic prevention is related to reduced risk of recurrent arterioembolic transient ischaemic attack and stroke. *J Neurol Neurosurg Psychiatry* 2002; 72: 338–42. Single exponential function was erroneously used for the calculation of figure 2. The correct figure 2 is reproduced below, which shows the predicted probability of recurrent TIA and stroke as calculated from the cumulative underlying hazard and the prognostic index (derived from multivariate regression coefficients, mean values of covariables, and number of embolic signals) by double exponential function.


**Table 2** Adverse events (%) according to FDA and EMEA standards.

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<th>Placebo (n=439)</th>
<th>Levetiracetam (n=672)</th>
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</tbody>
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*Adverse reaction: any event reported during clinical trial; FDA, Food and Drug Administration; Undesirable effect: all adverse events at least possibly related to the study drug; EMEA, European Medicinal Evaluation Agency.

Note: Adverse reactions and undesirable effects are derived from three efficacy and one safety, double blind placebo controlled trials. Patient numbers differ because the FDA included the crossover part of the study in the analysis, and some of these patients were counted twice.