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Book Reviews

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Stroke Therapy

edited by Marc Fisher, MD, 490 pp., ill., Boston, Butterworth-Heinemann, 1995. \$90.00.

This timely volume on the conventional and novel approaches to stroke treatment includes an impressive list of experts that have produced a useful, well-organized, and readable book. The coverage of the subject of stroke therapy is comprehensive, starting with a series of chapters on epidemiology, pathophysiology, and diagnostic techniques. This is followed by extensive reviews of medical, interventional, and surgical management of various stroke subtypes. The graphics are of high quality, the reference lists are for the most part exhaustive, and the volume is well indexed. In a book of homogeneously high quality chapters there are some excellent ones, such as those on pathophysiology of ischemic injury (Paczynski, Hsu, and Diringer), clinical trial design (Brass and Alter), medical therapy for stroke prevention (Norrvig), thrombolytic therapy (del Zoppo, Hamann, Fritridge, and Okada), and cytoprotective therapy (Wahlgren). The latter chapter contains a remarkably informative and balanced account of the basic and clinical aspects of neuroprotection.

A certain amount of redundancy among chapters is not beyond that expected in a multi-author volume. Aside from some mistakes in figure printing and rare typographical errors, the volume is carefully edited. Occasional recommendations in Chapter 12 that are at variance with guidelines followed in the United States (therapeutic aPTT of 50–120 seconds, intravenous phenytoin loading with 750 mg over 4 hours) do not detract from the usefulness and high quality of the chapter.

This book is a compendium of new information, and it will be a valuable and welcome addition for those in the specialties of neurology, neurosurgery, and emergency medicine who deal in the rapidly changing field of acute stroke management.

Carlos S. Kase, MD

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Pain Medicine—A Comprehensive Review

edited by P. Prithvi Raj, 571 pp., St. Louis, Mosby—Year Book, 1996, \$49.95.

This book is intended to be “a comprehensive review of the theoretical knowledge and scope of pain medicine.” The text is written almost entirely by anesthesiologists specializing in pain medicine, and targets primarily the anesthesiologist rather than the neurologist. The book opens with a series of introductory chapters covering methods of assessing and measuring pain. In general, these chapters provide little new or useful insight into patient assessment, and in some cases dwell unnecessarily on items of minimal relevance, such as the interpretation of routine laboratory tests and the physics of magnetic resonance imaging. The most disappointing aspect of this introductory section, however, is the relatively brief discussion of the basic anatomy and physiology of the pain pathways. A single chapter is devoted to outlining these basic concepts, an understanding of which is crucial to rational pain management.

The second section of the text describes the various modalities of pain management. The bias toward anesthesiologic management may be unsatisfying for many neurologists; while 18 chapters are devoted to detailed descriptions of interventional methods of pain management, a mere three chapters are devoted to the pharmacologic management of pain. To the book's credit, the anesthesiologic techniques are presented in a clear, orderly, and critical fashion, with descriptions of the procedures and their indications and potential complications, supplemented by useful illustrations. Of more interest to the non-anesthesiologist, the book's final section describes important pain syndromes, both acute and chronic, nociceptive and neuropathic. Particularly strong are chapters on chronic musculoskeletal pain, reflex sympathetic dystrophy, and phantom pain, each of which successfully integrates concepts of pathogenesis with the practicalities of diagnosis and management.

To allow for a quick review of the important subject matter and to assist in preparation for subspecialty examinations in pain medicine, the book provides a short series of multiple choice questions at the end of each chapter, as well as two test banks, each containing seventy-five questions. Unfortunately, a number of the questions suffer from poor wording, and in some cases the answers given contradict the text.

This book succeeds mainly as a practical guidebook to the anesthesiologic procedures available for pain management, and is unlikely to be of great interest to most practicing neurologists except for those requiring such a reference. As a comprehensive textbook of pain medicine, it fails to distinguish itself.

Christopher J. Watling, MD

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Handbook of Autonomic Nervous System Dysfunction

edited by Amos D. Korczyn, 567 pp., ill., New York, Marcel Dekker, 1995, \$185.00.

Professor Korczyn has assembled an international group of contributors to review autonomic nervous system dysfunction. The opening chapter augurs an eminently readable text. In this chapter the editor indicates that the charge accepted by the contributors was (1) to review progress in basic mechanisms, (2) to describe some clinical disorders of the autonomic nervous system, and (3) to describe some of the newer methods for testing autonomic nervous system functions. The book begins with a seemingly tongue-in-cheek overview of the way the autonomic nervous system has been viewed and classically taught. The reader senses that some of the myths about the autonomic nervous system will be dispelled, but within the same chapter, some of those myths are, instead, perpetuated. For example, it was long taught that the autonomic nervous system was purely efferent. Korczyn seems to support this concept when he mentions “possible afferent components” that are questionable. It is rather difficult to understand how afferent components could be considered questionable in light of many studies that have defined afferent elements of the autonomic nervous system. Studies from many laboratories have laid to rest the concept of an autonomic nervous system that is either purely efferent or purely peripheral. Therefore, it would have been quite helpful if this handbook began by addressing the first charge more extensively. A review of progress in understanding basic anatomy of the autonomic nervous system could have provided a good foundation for all that followed. Such a review could have been accomplished by fully defining a representative autonomic reflex arc. By not having dealt with newer concepts of anatomy, the book leaves the reader unsure about what is meant by the term “autonomic nervous system.” Do the authors imply by the term a purely efferent, a combined afferent and efferent, a purely peripheral, or a combined peripheral and central system? In fact, one finds that the book deals almost exclusively with the autonomic nervous system as a peripheral, efferent entity. Thus, there is no discussion of the interesting work relating to central modulation of sympathetic efferent activity in normal and diseased states. Likewise, the reader does not learn about autonomic afferents that project into the CNS and, through second and third order projections, contribute to reflex pathways. As a consequence, there is no discussion of the complex chemical mechanisms of neurotransmission and signal transduction at central autonomic synapses.

These shortcomings not only affect the few chapters (3 of 33) that could be considered to deal with basic mechanisms, but also impact chapters that address clinical effects of autonomic dysfunction. As the text was created as a handbook, the predominant reader is unlikely to be an expert in issues of autonomic control. Without such preparatory background those readers will doubtless be confused when clinical effects of baroreceptor afferent dysfunction are mentioned late in the text. The handbook also disappoints the reader in the difficulty presented when trying to access subject areas. That access can be found in the table of contents,

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