

Book Reviews

BRAINSTORMS: EPILEPSY IN OUR WORDS. PERSONAL ACCOUNTS OF LIVING WITH SEIZURES. 1993. By Steven C. Schachter. Published by Raven Press, Ltd. 104 pages. \$CDN 27.00 approx.

As an individual with epilepsy, I can truly say that sharing concerns, experiences, and also frustrations with fellow friends or acquaintances who have epilepsy is very comforting. The intention of Dr. Schachter's book is something many of us have been waiting for in order to help us to realize our illness is not a catastrophe.

In this book Dr. Schachter gives an overview of epilepsy and seizures. I feel that a more extended explanation should have been given by the doctor earlier in the book. It would have been of benefit for newly diagnosed patients and their uneducated families.

In the book there are numerous descriptions of seizures by patients and some of these have been done extremely well. A wide range of seizure types is clearly apparent. There are however a few suggestions for improvement. I felt that there were too many descriptions of seizures and some of the descriptions were too short for a point to be made and others were quite confusing. A suggestion would be to have a more consistent pattern for these seizure descriptions starting with the type of epilepsy that the individual has and then having the patient state their age at the time of writing as well as their age at the time of diagnosis. The frequency, duration, and a brief description of the seizures could follow.

There was a chapter entitled Living with Epilepsy. In this there were many statements of reality and understanding concerning the strength that is needed to live with epilepsy and still hold your head high. There were a few statements that could make newly diagnosed patients feel failure if they are unable to handle their epilepsy with ease.

There was no final summary by Dr. Schachter at the end of the book and I feel that this would have been beneficial.

The purpose of this book is outstanding, but I feel that more explanation of types of epilepsy is needed. Those who know very little about epilepsy must have more guidance so that the story lines similar to their own can be identified and helpful to them. I also feel that this book can be a prime ingredient for Doctor-Patient communication. The patients can compare their own seizures and feelings to those expressed in the book and do so with confidence that they are not losing their minds. This book also may well help doctors understand epilepsy from the patient's perspective.

*Mrs. Kerry Nelson
Calgary, Alberta*

TENSION-TYPE HEADACHE, CLASSIFICATION, MECHANISMS, AND TREATMENT. 1st Edition, 1993. Edited by Jes Olesen and Jean Schoenen. Published by Raven Press. 293 pages. \$CDN 114.00 approx.

This book constitutes Volume 3 of the Frontiers in Headache research series. The aim of this series is to demonstrate the major advances made in our understanding of headache.

Like the rest of this series, the book is multidisciplinary, involving both the medical and basic sciences. Although the book is the result of an international headache research seminar, the meeting

was specifically organized with the purpose of generating the book, so it is not simply a conference proceeding.

The book is well organized into six sections, ranging from "clinical features and epidemiology" to "central mechanisms of tension-type headache" and "therapeutic aspects". As with any multi-author text, the 46 contributions vary greatly in quality. Some of the contributions are very short, deal with very narrow topics, and will be of limited usefulness to practicing physicians. Each section of the book however does include one or more overview papers by leading experts, and many of these are very useful indeed. For example, the section on therapeutic aspects includes an excellent review of behavioural treatment strategies by K.A. Holroyd. Similar very useful articles also appear in other sections of the book, for example the review of "Chronic Tension-type Headache: Diagnosis, Clinical Characteristics and Health Impact" by N.T. Mathew in the clinical features and epidemiology section. Finally, each section of the book contains a discussion summary written by a leading expert.

The section on therapeutic aspects is relatively short, 40 pages, reflecting perhaps the state of the art for tension-type headaches. As stated in the preface, improvements have occurred in the behavioural treatment techniques, but in the field of pharmacology, no significant progress has been made for many years.

This book is however intended to stimulate research, and some four of the six sections deal with headache mechanisms, or the pathology, pharmacology and biochemistry of tension-type headaches. These sections do contain some excellent reviews, for example on peripheral nociceptors in muscle. Some of the articles in these sections, for example "Contingent Negative Variation in Tension-type Headache" may not be of interest to the average neurologist. However, this volume clearly would be a valuable addition to the library of any neurologist or other physician with a major interest in headache.

*W. J. Becker
Calgary, Alberta*

FOCAL PERIPHERAL NEUROPATHIES. 2nd edition, 1993. By John D. Stewart. Published by Raven Press. 506 pages. \$CDN 102.00 approx.

This is the updated version of Focal Peripheral Neuropathies originally published in 1987 by John Stewart. The new edition is slightly longer (506 pages versus 421) and is put out by a different publisher.

The first edition of this book is succinct yet comprehensive and a very useful text. Indeed, it would be a difficult job to revise the first edition but this has been accomplished. Of particular value in the new edition is the comprehensive upgrading of references. This has occurred in each chapter, thus making this book a useful map of the complete literature on the topic. A practicing neurologist would benefit from these additional references. Large portions of the text and the appendices are essentially unchanged. There are some improvements in the diagrams, a valuable feature of the first edition of this book.

My criticisms are quite minor and really do not detract from the overall quality of this new edition. Under causes of Focal Peripheral Neuropathies, ischemia probably deserves more mention (Chapter

2). At the very least it deserves more attention than haemorrhage into nerves (page 29). In some of the more common neuropathies, i.e., carpal tunnel syndrome, a more complete discussion of specific electrophysiologic abnormalities would be helpful, i.e., a table perhaps comparing distal motor latency, median palmar studies, antidromic or orthodromic techniques might be valuable. The author states that multiple tests on the median nerve increases the chance of obtaining a false positive result. While this is probably correct, the chance of false-positive testing may in fact be reduced if multiple tests are obtained with strict criteria, e.g., requiring greater than 1 abnormality to diagnose CTS. The difficulty, of course, is defining what the gold standard test for CTS is then judging the electrophysiology according to this (page 181). It might be of interest to know what the author's bias is. Some clinical neurophysiologists would disagree that EMG examination of abductor pollicis brevis is useful in diagnosing early CTS. In Chapter 4 I would have liked to have seen a better discussion of conduction block and temporal dispersion using up-to-date criteria. Conduction block is an important feature of a number of focal neuropathies and it would be helpful to have this discussed thoroughly. Although some MRI images have appeared in this new edition, I think readers (particularly those in the United States) will be searching for more. The revised picture of the brachial plexus in Chapter 7 is a very worthy addition to this new edition.

John Stewart has preserved his clear writing style and objective perspective. This is a worthwhile text for neurologists in general, physiatrists and particularly clinicians who see these patients in clinics or neurophysiology laboratories.

*Douglas W. Zochodne
Calgary, Alberta*

THE MENTAL STATUS EXAMINATION IN NEUROLOGY. 3rd Edition, 1993. Edited by Richard L. Strub. Published by F.A. Davis. 244 pages. \$CDN 30.00 approx.

The examination of higher functions is assuming increasing importance in neurology yet it remains one of the most difficult and time-consuming parts of the neurological exam. Strub and Black in the third edition of their manual *The Mental Status Examination* have given us a clearly-written guide to carrying out and interpreting this segment of the neurological exam. The authors lucidly and concisely explain the various bedside techniques but go much beyond that in also dealing with the underlying pathophysiology of behavioral signs, symptoms and syndromes. Each of the chapters dealing with particular aspects of cerebral function begins by defining and explaining terminology and then discusses evaluation and finally anatomy and clinical interpretation. Subsequent chapters deal with formal neuropsychological testing, the use of ancillary services such as speech pathology and social work, a summary of the screening exam for dementia and a recording form for the mental status exam. Each chapter ends with a comprehensive reference list. A number of illustrated cases and well-selected figures add to the value of the text.

This volume is unique in providing a detailed step by step guide to the mental status examination. It will be of use to both neurologists and psychiatrists and students of these disciplines. The third edition has incorporated advances in our understanding of

behavioral neurology and in fact serves as an introduction to that discipline. This book is highly recommended.

*Alan Guberman
Ottawa, Ontario*

NEUROLOGICAL AND NEUROSURGICAL INTENSIVE CARE. 3rd Edition, 1993. Edited by Allan H. Ropper. Published by Raven Press, New York. 505 pages. \$CDN 119.00 approx.

Neurocritical care or neuro-intensive care is a new specialty that includes both clinical neurology and neurosurgery and, by necessity, incorporates many aspects of general critical care medicine. It deals with acute, life-threatening disorders of the central and peripheral nervous systems and with the neurological complications of systemic diseases.

The book contains 26 chapters written by American experts in various relevant disciplines. It deals with adult intensive care, but many principles probably apply to pediatric neurocritical care. There are specific chapters: cerebrovascular disease (including occlusive arterial disease, intraparenchymal hemorrhage and subarachnoid hemorrhage), head trauma, brain tumors, central nervous system infections, status epilepticus, Guillain-Barré syndrome, myasthenia gravis and spinal cord compression. There are also chapters that deal with more general topics: management of intracranial pressure, ventilatory management, post-operative care of neurosurgical patients, ethical and legal principles (including brain death and withdrawal of life support – from the American perspective), nosocomial infections and electrophysiological monitoring.

The book has many merits: it is a comprehensive, state-of-the-art treatment by recognized experts; it is useful and practical, with emphasis on management. A number of newer concepts, such as salt-wasting in subarachnoid hemorrhage and the pros and cons of hyperventilation for raised intracranial pressure, are well presented. Not all statements are based on rigorous clinical trials, because few have been done in this young discipline. However, most suggestions are based on scientific principles, solid experience and good clinical judgment. There is a minor degree of redundancy and there are a few obvious "typos".

The book should probably be the current standard text for this emerging discipline and is recommended to anyone interested in neurocritical care. More importantly, it will also be of great value to any neurosurgeons and neurologists, including residents, who are faced with the management of the various life-threatening diseases of the nervous system.

*G. Bryan Young
London, Ontario*

NEUROREGENERATION. 1st edition, 1993. Edited by Alfredo Gorio. Published by Raven Press. 323 pages. \$CDN 144.00 approx.

This collection of 15 review articles is not the consequence of a symposium. Most of the invited contributors have been conscientious in providing extensive reviews and the result is a useful overview of research in regeneration as of 1991. The emphasis is on cellular interactions in neural plasticity and repair, only two chapters being devoted to molecular topics.