

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