

HANDBOOK OF NEUROSURGERY. SIXTH EDITION. 2006. By Mark S. Greenberg. Published by Thieme. 1016 pages. Price C\$96.

Since the first edition of Mark Greenberg's "Handbook of Neurosurgery" appeared in 1990, this text has been the faithful pocket companion of a generation of neurosurgical residents. Now in its sixth edition "The Handbook" continues to provide concise and detailed information on a full spectrum of neurosurgical topics. Most usefully it gives the trainee readily accessible and comprehensive care and management guidelines when seeing patients in the Emergency department, on the ward and in the clinics. The latest edition follows the format that has made previous editions so popular. In 1014 pages of fine print the core neurosurgical topics of spine, tumour, pain, trauma and cerebrovascular disease are covered. Less in-depth coverage is given to the neurosurgically relevant aspects of the affiliated field of neuroanaesthesia, neurology, neuroanatomy, neurophysiology, neuroradiology, neuro-ophthalmology and neuro-otology. Dozens of clinical conditions are presented under the conventional headings of etiology, clinical presentation, evaluation and treatment. The information is arranged in point form or in terse sentences allowing each condition to be covered in the space of several pages or less. Information likely to be of particular interest to interns and residents such as drug dosages, post-operative orders and drug side effects is frequently provided.

A volume of this breadth must of necessity sacrifice depth, and residents looking for historical details, detailed discussion of surgical technique or histological information must look elsewhere. Areas of nuance or controversy may be mentioned, but are not fully explored. This shortcoming is partially recompensed by the extensive reference list which concludes each chapter. On reviewing the reference sections it was disconcerting to see how few of the references are more recent than the year 2000 - the vast majority being from the 1970s, 80s and early 90s.

The final chapter lists the differential diagnosis of a wide number of neurological signs and symptoms (e.g. myelopathy, low back pain) as well as by various anatomic locations (e.g. lesions of the orbit, lesions of the cavernous sinus). I felt this to be a particularly useful addition to the book and one which many trainees should appreciate. Again, however, the lack of discussion as to how to clinically differentiate one entity from another is a frustration.

The general information provided in Chapter 23 on surgical approached in neurosurgery, I felt, was a real strength of this text. A wealth of useful, basic information on topics such as surgical risks, writing post-operative orders and the management of surgical complications is given - information which is often not found in the standard specialty texts.

I would recommend this volume to any neurosurgical resident entering his or her training program and indeed, would suggest that neurosurgical training programs provide this book to their first-year residents. Medical students with a developing interest in neurosurgery, neurosurgical physician assists and emergency room personnel will also find this a useful compendium. Senior residents however, would be advised to consult more comprehensive texts when preparing for Royal College examinations.

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ATLAS OF NEUROMUSCULAR DISEASES, A PRACTICAL GUIDELINE. 2005. By Eva L. Feldman, Wolfgang Grisold, James W. Russell, Udo Zifko. Published by Springer. 474 pages. Price C\$300.

The field of neuromuscular diseases has expanded tremendously in the past several years and there have been a number of textbooks published. Most attempt to be comprehensive and up-to-date as possible including recent genetic and molecular biology concepts which are critical to the understanding of these disorders. On the other hand, only a few have attempted what Feldman and authors have accomplished with their "Atlas of Neuromuscular Diseases". In the preface, they clearly state that this is not an exhaustive review of all neuromuscular diseases but rather a quick guide to diagnosis and treatment of common conditions effecting the peripheral nerves, muscle and the neuromuscular junction. The target audience varies from medical students to practicing neurologists not specializing in neuromuscular diseases.

The authors use several novel approaches in order to help the reader find pertinent information quickly. This includes tool bars outlining the most useful diagnostic approaches for each disease. While this does provide the reader with a quick view of tests and degrees of usefulness for any given condition, for many disorders it appears somewhat redundant. In keeping with the concept of an atlas, this book very nicely divides information into categories for each disorder in a way the reader can quickly access the information required. The text is simple, to the point without exhaustive attention to finer details. They use a minimalist approach to their referencing, usually no more than five or six per disorder, which is appropriate for the content of the text. Tables and lists are extensively used throughout this textbook and provide the reader to easily extract the information. The figures and diagrams are useful and complement the text. The sections are, however, unequally divided with far too much emphasis on mononeuropathies at the expense of other conditions, especially the myopathy section. There is also a considerable waste of space in that many pages contain only a few sentences or paragraphs. Nevertheless, this is a useful book which will be appreciated by residents and clinicians outside the field of neuromuscular diseases.

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