

pathological changes in syphilis, subacute combined degeneration, poliomyelitis and Friedreich's ataxia but not cervical spondylosis or trauma. Approximately the same amount of coverage is given to hereditary disorders of lipid metabolism as to head injury. The selection of spinal fractures is representative rather than extensive. Almost all of the neuropathology presented could have been presented a decade or more ago and little attention is paid to recent advances in molecular neuropathology. For example, spinocerebellar atrophies and hereditary peripheral neuropathies are classified eponymously by symptoms rather than by the underlying genetic defect. In this respect, the claim on the back cover that the book provides "updates on rapidly evolving research and clinical advances" is difficult to justify.

As stated by Bryce Weir in his foreword, the book could be very useful to a medical student or resident preparing for a multiple choice examination. It fills a niche in complementing textbooks with a more systematic, contemporary, and clinical approach.

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**LIMBIC SEIZURES IN CHILDREN. MARIANI FOUNDATION PEDIATRIC NEUROLOGY SERIES: 8.** 2001. Edited by Giuliano Avanzini, Anne Beaumanoir, Laura Mira. Published by John Libbey & Company Ltd. 258 pages. C\$102.00 approx.

This book has 27 chapters based on a colloquium "to outline the specific expression of epilepsies involving the limbic structures in children and to establish a consensus on the evidence relevant to the clinical management of these epilepsies". The book is technical and not an easy read. It will likely be of interest to experts in epilepsy centres but not to the more casual reader.

The organization of the chapters is a bit unclear. The first four chapters are devoted to the anatomy, circuitry and some of the basic epilepsy pathways in the limbic system. We learn that malformations in the temporal lobe can allow seizure discharge to jump from the allocortex to the neocortex. The embryology of the limbic system is discussed but developmental aspects of limbic neurophysiology receive little attention.

Next a chapter by Spencer and colleagues defines the clinical syndrome of mesial temporal lobe epilepsy and suggests that it may be different in adults and children. They suggest that mesial temporal sclerosis is a progressive lesion because the sprouting of mossy fibers is seen in adult pathology but not in early childhood.

Chapters 6 through 11 concentrate on various clinical features of limbic seizures and generally conclude that these features are often seen in children. There is a masterful analysis of "loss of consciousness" versus "loss of contact" as the defining feature of complex partial seizures by the late Claudio Munari who was known for his provocative questioning of our current terminology and classification. Vegetative, motor, autonomic, language and motor manifestations are discussed in separate chapters. We learn of perisylvian spread, involvement of the insula, and distinctions between frontal and temporal seizures.

There is a short review of the role of febrile seizures as the cause of mesial temporal sclerosis. Given the huge amount of controversy about this issue over the past 50 years, it was disappointing not to see more. In particular, the issue of dual pathology is mentioned but not amplified.

A series of chapters focus on memory disturbance, psychic experiences and perceptual/intellectual issues. The famous series of

Ounstead is critiqued for selection bias and the large proportion of children with mental handicap. Ictal depth recordings, SPECT and MRI are described.

Even though a major aim of the book was to analyze treatment, there is only a single chapter devoted to medical therapy in children. Unfortunately there are few randomized trials to turn to, especially with newer medications. A four-page chapter discusses surgical treatment without any references or literature review. A rambling chapter tries to come to grips with the presence of benign limbic epilepsy in childhood.

In general, the illustrations are good. The pitch of the text, especially for the summaries, is very small – bifocals are needed! The vocabulary is sometimes challenging often without definitions – loco-regional, horripilation, recurrent collateral sprouting, rubefaction, projective motricity, intercritical discharge – to name a few. The book struggles with the relatively small literature on this subject that is truly related to children. Most clinical series have fewer than 20 children and many of the chapters concentrate on fewer than 10 studied cases. Most of the cases discussed come from outstanding European expert centers that focus on intractable epilepsy. There is apparently much less written about the more common, controllable limbic epilepsies in children. At least half of the book emphasizes experiences with adults.

My enthusiasm for this book is somewhat limited. It does, however, point out the need for more careful studies, particularly clinical studies, of partial epilepsy in childhood. It is apparent that we need better definitions, better methods of investigation and above all, more collaboration in randomized treatment studies.

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**PATHOGENESIS OF NEURODEGENERATIVE DISORDERS.** 2001. Edited by Mark P. Mattson. Published by Humana Press. 294 pages. C\$211.20 approx.

The title of this book is somewhat misleading. First, it does not deal exclusively or comprehensively with disorders typically classified as "neurodegenerative". Second, it does not cover disease pathogenesis in a broad sense, but focuses quite specifically on a few final mechanisms of neuronal cell death. The first two chapters provide good overviews of the molecular and biochemical events involved in apoptosis and oxidative injury. Each subsequent chapter deals with a specific neurologic disease, in detail. Although a few of the authors provide a more balanced view, most concentrate on cataloguing the markers of oxidative stress and/or apoptosis which have been identified in postmortem tissue with less emphasis on the preceding events which are probably more disease specific. Individual chapters are devoted to Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, Huntington's disease and amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, however, there is no mention of dementia with Lewy bodies or less common neurodegenerative conditions such as Pick's disease, progressive supranuclear palsy, or the multiple system atrophies. While the chapter on ischemic stroke helps to define the importance of oxidative injury in the broader scope of neurological disease, the final two chapters dealing with spinal cord injury and Duchene muscular dystrophy seem out of place. The text is well-referenced and illustrations are limited to a few useful diagrams and flow charts. I agree with the Editor's opinion that this text will be a useful