Books Received


MOLECULAR MECHANISMS OF NEURODEGENERATIVE DISEASES. 2000. Edited by Marie-Francoise Chesnelet. Published by The Humana Press. 410 pages. C$183.75 approx.

NEUROLOGICAL EPONYMS. 2000. Edited by Peter J. Koehler, George W. Bruyn, John M.S. Pearce. Published by Oxford University Press. 386 pages. C$87.95 approx.


OPERATIVE TECHNIQUES IN PEDIATRIC NEUROSURGERY. 2000. by A. Leland Albright, Ian F. Pollack, P. David Adelson. Published by Thieme. 312 pages. C$263.13 approx.


PATHOLOGY OF SKELETAL MUSCLE. SECOND EDITION. 2001. by Stirling Carpenter, George Karpati. Published by Oxford University Press. 662 pages. C$458.64 approx.


Book Reviews


This is the sixth edition of one of the first “modern” texts in Pediatric Neurology (First Edition 1974). In this edition, Harvey Sarnat joined John Menkes as principal editor. In addition, the number of contributing authors has grown significantly to 16. In essence, this text has changed from a single author to a multi-author text and this was essential for its survival. In fact, even Jean Aicardi sought the help of three contributors in his 2nd edition of “Diseases of the Nervous System in Childhood” supporting the notion that the era of a single author pediatric neurology text is over. The editors succeeded, however, in keeping “a single author” style and avoiding many of the usual multiple author text faults by active participation in almost every chapter. The information is clearly presented and up-to-date. The tables are overall more helpful than the illustrations. Harvey Sarnat’s knowledge and understanding of neuroembryology has added significantly to the value of this text in his clear presentation of the complex issues of neurodevelopment and malformations. Finally, each chapter is well-referenced and the index is user-friendly.
Even the best texts have shortcomings. I wish this book had better quality reproduction of neuroimaging. I also missed more discussion of controversies in pediatric neurology particularly of management issues. For example, whether one should anticoagulate infants or children with venous-sinus thrombosis and under what circumstances, or elaborate on the utility of corticosteroid treatment in bacterial meningitis in the *H. influenza* vaccine era. I would also like modern texts to use more evidence-based medicine principles to assess different treatment modalities, possibly by using a grading system of the methodological soundness of the referred studies.

Occasionally, important pieces of information are missing. For example, the fact that children with the Wolf-Hirschhorn Syndrome almost always suffer from intractable epilepsy often similar to the epilepsy observed in the Angelman Syndrome, was not mentioned.

However, my criticism is minor compared with the achievements of the authors and editors. I placed this text in my library at a hand’s reach next to Aicardi’s and Volpe’s texts and have been opening it almost daily to look up different issues.

In conclusion, here is an excellent text in Pediatric Neurology with an emphasis on basic science and the clinical picture of common and rare disorders and at a very affordable price – almost one quarter of the price of Aicardi’s. I strongly recommend it to every clinician with an interest in Pediatric Neurology.

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**DRUG TREATMENT OF MIGRAINE AND OTHER HEADACHES VOLUME 17. MONOGRAPHS IN CLINICAL NEUROSCIENCE.** 2000. Edited by H.C. Diener. Published by Karger. 372 pages. CS281.50 approx.

**Introduction:** In the preface, Diener writes about the need for a book (on headache) that concentrates on current drug treatment based on pharmacological knowledge and evidenced-based medicine. Most of the book (307 of 364 pages) is devoted to migraine – almost exclusively migraine with and without aura.

**Comparison:** I compared the monogram edited by Diener with two others: (i) “Headache”, edited by Goadsby & Silberstein (1997) and (ii) “The Headaches” 2nd edition, edited by Olesen et al (2000). All three are multi-authored. Several authors have contributed chapters to each of these monograms. Hence, much of the information is “triplicated”.

**Strengths:** There is considerable pharmacological information on a number of drugs, especially the triptans, fulfilling one of Diener’s objectives.

**Evidenced-based?:** Although all chapters list and discuss a number of studies and references, the authors do not tell us how these were chosen for the review. First, how did the authors “search” the literature? Second, if they “selected” the references they included, what were the criteria for including/excluding references? The authors do not use the commonly accepted (at least in North America) “Levels of Evidence” and “Strength of Recommendations” in presenting the results. The two-part review by Pryse-Phillips, et al CMAJ 1997;156:1273-87; and CMAJ 1998;159:47-54 could have served as a model.

**Limitations/Omissions:**

(i) The use of sumatriptan in pediatric migraine is mentioned (pp 103-104). Otherwise, headaches in children and adolescents are not dealt with.

(ii) The chronic daily headache syndrome, met with in adults and children, is not discussed.

(iii) Benign exertional headache, another common headache syndrome encountered is also not mentioned.

(iv) Most of us (including those who practice pediatric neurology) have accepted the International Headache Society Classification and Criteria. Since these were first published in 1988, a number of peer reviewed papers, especially dealing with children, have discussed limitations of the original classification and criteria and made suggestions for revision. I am disappointed at the absence of a critical re-appraisal of this subject in the chapter on classification and symptoms (pp 16-23).

(v) I could not find any discussion on topiramate or botulinum toxin in the management of headache and these are not referenced in the index, suggesting that the review of drug treatment may not have been as current as one would have liked.

(vi) Non-pharmacologic and “alternative” treatments are not discussed. In the preface, Diener felt the inclusion of this topic would have been too much for one volume.

**Conclusions:**

(i) The monogram edited by Diener is not as inclusive as the larger (1000+ pages) monogram edited by Olesen et al. For this reason, the latter is more likely to serve as a current reference for headaches (in adults). Readers should compare the two and select the one that best suits individual needs.

(ii) Neither has a chapter critically appraising the International Headache Society Classification and Criteria.

(iii) Neither does justice to headaches in children and adolescents.

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