



Book Reviews

Living in a State of Stuck

How technology impacts the lives of people with disabilities (Second Edition)

Edited by Marcia J Scherer

Brookline Books, Massachusetts, USA, 1996. 181 pp. \$17.95

ISBN 1-57129-027-3

'Living in a state of stuck' is an intriguing and imaginative title for what otherwise might appear dull or daunting, the impact of technology on people living with disability. The contents represent an enjoyable and very readable account of this topic. Based around the personal experiences of eight or so individuals with spinal cord injury or cerebral palsy, it provides an interesting insight into their personal views of the success and limitations of assistive technologies. It is more of a digestible paperback than a textbook and more sociology than science but is all the better as a result. Both professionals involved in advising about or providing aids or assistance devices and those using them should find this small volume edifying. It is well organised with a good index and useful reference list; it is not expensively produced, but then it is not over-priced and profits are equally shared by the National Spinal Cord Injury Association and the United Cerebral Palsy Association. I would warmly recommend this book particular to professionals in training who may feel that technology holds the key to managing disability rather than addressing the individual and their needs in a holistic way. This may help them avoid getting stuck.

Dr Brian Pentland, FRCP
Rehabilitation Studies Unit,
University of Edinburgh,
Edinburgh, Scotland

Sexual and Reproductive Neurorehabilitation

Edited by Mindy Aisen

Humana Press, New Jersey, USA. June 1997.

244 pp. US \$99.50: ISBN 0-89603-376-7

There is a growing interest in the field of neuro-rehabilitation for patients with sexual and reproductive problems. It reflects the importance of sexuality as is being reported in numerous quality-of-life studies of neural-injured people. The current book addresses 'all members of the rehabilitation team', and refers to a long list, from neurologist to social worker. The authors do this in a rather conventional way: thus the book starts with chapters on basic physiology and pathophysiology, with the best part being three chapters on exclusively female problems connected with neurological disorders. The last part contains chapters dealing with sexual and reproductive problems connected with all major neurological disease entities. It is obvious that describing basically the

same sexual disturbances in those with stroke, multiple sclerosis, SCI and six other main entities, the risk of repeating the same symptoms, examinations, tests and treatments in every chapter is high, and it does not look as if the editor has made a great effort to avoid this problem. The chapters on basic physiology are very basic as written for the interested layman. He will, however, be embarrassed by the near total lack of illustrations (11 figures and tables throughout the whole book). Five of these are concentrated in the best chapter: 'Sexual Dysfunctions Following Stroke', where you even find the most comprehensive review of the basic physiology.

The chapter on 'Sexual Rehabilitation Issues in Spinal Cord Injury' covers 9 pages (including one figure illustrating rectal probe insertion for electro-ejaculation), plus 18 references. Both male and female problems are well discussed, and fertility as a major part of neurorehabilitation is taken into consideration. This chapter gives a fair description of symptoms and signs, and deals with the main treatment possibilities but does not point at any future developments. Some statements will surprise the reader: 'Most men (82–95%) with complete lesions report an ejaculation' (page 201). In my patients it is more likely to be the other way around.

Controversial statement can be found elsewhere:

'In females, orgasm consists of a series of uterine and pelvic muscle contractions' (page 113). Any clinician with SCI-female patients reporting orgasms knows that this is nonsense.

'Afferent stimuli of ejaculation are transmitted by the dorsal nerve of the penis' (page 115). Maybe, but stimulation of that nerve is not the best way of eliciting the ejaculation reflex.

The pathways for psychogenic erections through the thoraco-lumbar sympathetic nerves seem to be overlooked (page 4).

The references are numerous and fairly up to date. It is understandable that references from the USA are preferred, but when others are used, the names should be correctly spelled (page 118: Both Vinken and Bruyn are misspelled).

There is much useful information in this book, but the editor should have been more ruthless and cut the text to half of the present volume. When you then have to pay 100 dollars for this rather cheap production with very few illustrations, you will probably not have value for your money.

Dr Ragnar Stien
Laboratory of neuro-urology
Department of Neurology,
Ullevål Hospital
Oslo, Norway