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Book Reviews

Neuroprotection in CNS Diseases

Edited by PR Bar & M Flint Beal
Publishers: Marcel Dekker Inc New York. 1997. 585pp.
ISBN 0 8247 9876 7

In recent years the concept of neuroprotection has extended into virtually every disease of the central nervous system from subarachnoid haemorrhage to epilepsy, Parkinson's disease and multiple sclerosis. This book attempts to draw together the experimental basis for neuroprotection and the current status of neuroprotective therapies in clinical practice. More than 300 pages, which represents over half the volume, are devoted to fundamental aspects of neuroprotection. Few will read this section in detail but it does provide an excellent introduction to the pathophysiology of neuronal damage and highlights the fact that the mechanisms may be similar in very different clinical situations. The section is extremely well referenced as indeed is the whole of this book.

The second part of the book deals with neuroprotection in acute neurological disease and there are detailed chapters on subarachnoid haemorrhage, acute ischaemic stroke, trauma to the brain and spinal cord and neuroprotection in hypoxic injury.

The third section concerns neuroprotection in chronic neurological disease and includes chapters on motor neurone disease, Parkinson's, Altzheimer's disease and Huntington's. Although the book is concerned primarily with CNS diseases there is a useful chapter on diabetic and toxic neuropathies. I suspect that in future editions the clinical section will expand to include, for example, epilepsy and the use of interferons in multiple sclerosis which although acting as immune modulators might be regarded as providing neuroprotection. The clinical situations dealt with in the current volume are done well but are limited in their scope.

This is a well produced and authoritative book to which there is really no current alternative. It will be useful as a source of reference to practising clinicians and neuroscientists in a very rapidly evolving field.

Dr NF Lawton

Electromyography in Clinical Practice

Author: Michael J Aminoff
Publishers: Harcourt Brace. 630pp.
ISBN 0 44 307681 2.

Michael Aminoff provided us with this textbook in 1978 with new editions in 1987 and 1998. It is a favoured textbook in many laboratories. There are still signs of its 1970s origin but this is no reprint, there has been extensive updating with sensible commentary on new techniques. There is a fine balance between useful procedures and research techniques with clinical comment on the more recently defined conditions and syndromes, eg mitochondrial disease, Lyme disease.

It is always difficult to see what is missing, but do not expect much about the central nervous system; that is outside the scope of the book although evoked potentials are mentioned. That difficult area between spinal cord and limb where nerve root and plexus pathology abounds, is covered comprehensively and maturely and is probably the best account available of neurophysiologic investigation of this region. The recent advances in disorders of the neuromuscular junction and the pelvic diaphragm are less satisfactory but an important inclusion is the neurophysiological investigation of the phrenic nerve and diaphragm which includes new methods.

This is not a book to grace your bookshelves. It will be on your desk, in your hand, by your side in clinics and, unless you are very careful, 'borrowed' by your colleagues. My copy of the 2nd edition is now looking very worn and one can be thankful that Churchill Livingstone have produced a book that can withstand continual usage.

EM Sedgwick