

Book Review

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CT of the Head and Spine

Norbert Hosten and Thomas Liebig

Thieme 436 pp.

ISBN: 3131267119 Price: £85.00

This book was originally published by Professor Hosten and Dr Liebig in 2000 and the English language translation was subsequently published in 2002. The stated intention of this book is to provide a comprehensive and up-to-date reference work on CT imaging of the head and spine. It is aimed at postgraduate medical doctors and while its primary readership should be radiologists, neurologists and neurosurgeons may also be expected to be interested. To produce a book exclusively devoted to CT imaging when magnetic resonance imaging plays such a fundamental role in the radiological investigation of the brain and spine is a bold move.

There are two main sections in the book: CT of the head and CT of the spine. The first section has subdivisions on anatomy and general clinical and technical aspects followed by cranio-cerebral trauma, cerebrovascular diseases, inflammatory diseases, intracranial tumours, degenerative and demyelinating diseases, congenital brain diseases, postoperative findings, and facial skeleton and skull base. The second section has similar initial introductory subdivisions followed by functional and structural abnormalities, intraspinal masses, and inflammatory diseases.

The initial section on anatomy of the head is let down by the inaccurate placement of a number of the anatomical marker arrows. The following subdivisions describe the pathological processes with a standardised format: pathogenesis, frequency, clinical manifestations, CT morphology, and differential diagnosis. While this

approach has encouraged the use of some clear and useful tables, it has led to brevity of explanation. The general quality of the illustrations is good. References are not included in the body of the text but are provided at the end of each chapter, often as an encouragement to further reading rather than to support a particular assertion within the text. Many references are a decade or more old.

The sections on cranio-cerebral trauma and cerebrovascular disease are generally good. The congenital brain disease section is brief and poor. It is difficult to do justice to demyelination and degenerative diseases in CT descriptions of them. The sections on spinal trauma and spinal degenerative disease are good, but most of the spinal section suffers because CT offers little information on disease processes within the spinal canal.

More space should have been provided for an explanation of the process and benefits of spiral and multislice CT scanning. Intracranial CT angiography is briefly mentioned, but the role of CT angiography in the assessment of extra-cranial carotid disease is not discussed. The current and future role of CT in assessing cerebral perfusion is an important omission from this book.

While CT continues to play a very important role in the radiological investigation of the head and spine, MRI is so fundamental to their current imaging that a book dealing exclusively with CT has major limitations. Unfortunately, this book has been published at least a decade too late, and does not provide a comprehensive overview of its subject matter.

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