Epilepsy in Childhood and Adolescence – 3rd Edition
By Richard Appleton and John Gibbs
London, Taylor & Francis, 2003, pp 160, £24.95, US$47.95
ISBN 1 84184362 8 (Paperback)

SIR–The third edition of this book will no doubt be as popular as previous editions if the interest in my copy is anything to go by. Our specialist epilepsy nurse ‘borrowed’ it when it had been in my possession for no more than a few minutes. On its return to my pigeon hole I was left a note by one of my colleagues asking where they could get a copy. My reading of it anywhere remotely public prompted multiple questions from colleagues who regularly see children with epilepsy in a general paediatric setting.

Finally undisturbed, with a tight grasp of the book, I managed to read it. I was rewarded with a well structured, intelligible textbook that would no doubt be useful to any paediatrician seeing children with epilepsy.

The introduction gave useful definitions and helpful figures regarding epidemiology, including the mortality associated with epilepsy. In light of Leicester (Department of Health, Independent Review of Paediatric Neurology 2003) the importance of making a correct diagnosis of epilepsy has been further highlighted. Therefore, the chapter on diagnosis, with age-related differential diagnoses was valuable in this regard. The book is laid out to take you through the classification of epilepsy, and then addresses more specifically neonatal seizures, febrile seizures, and epilepsy in adolescence. This leads onto investigation and treatment and, finally, the impact of epilepsy is focused upon. The appendices are also valuable, giving key points on epilepsy, medico-legal aspects of epilepsy, and useful contact details for those with epilepsy, or working with people with epilepsy. This practical evidence-based book also contains a long list of references.

The layout throughout is clear, with key points listed in boxes making it easy to dip into this book for reference. I have to confess that the multiple boxes in the classification of epilepsy chapter did cause my mind to wander during reading. I can see that these would be useful as a reference point, but are, perhaps, a little dry encountered all together. Illustrations of more common abnormalities seen on computed tomography, magnetic resonance or SPECT imaging were interesting and informative.

The authors state that they hope this book will provide ‘a useful and practical knowledge base’. This I think they have achieved. There is always more that can be written on the topic of epilepsy. However this book provides enough information to guide clinical practice without overwhelming the reader. I believe that it will be a valuable aid to all those involved in the care and diagnosis of children with epilepsy. I know I will be keeping hold of my copy.

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Tuberous Sclerosis Complex: From Basic Science to Clinical Phenotypes. International Review of Child Neurology Series
Edited by Paolo Curatolo
London, Mac Keith Press, 2003, pp 328, £55.00, US$75.00
ISBN 1 898683 39 5 (Hardback)

This book is a comprehensive review of the clinical and molecular aspects of tuberous sclerosis, and is well-illustrated with clinical and radiological examples. It describes the historical evolution of our understanding of tuberous sclerosis and analyzes a wealth of research studies behind this. All relevant aspects of the condition are covered, although slanted towards a neurological perspective, and there is little overlap of chapter content – a problem sometimes encountered in edited multi-author books. There is an abundance of clinical data which is detailed and well-presented. The written content is good, and well-referenced. However, many of the radiological images look blurred and of poor definition, and the dermatological features could also be better illustrated e.g. a picture of ‘confetti’ lesions would have been helpful.

There are chapters addressing the molecular pathogenesis and genetic aspects. However, there is a significant lack of information on genetic counselling and on options open to families when planning children. A point not explained in sufficient detail (chapter on ‘Diagnostic Criteria’) is how to evaluate whether either parent of a child who has an apparently sporadic form of tuberous sclerosis could be mosaic for the condition (betrayed by minimal localized clinical features) and thus at risk of having further children with the condition. This is clearly of crucial importance for genetic counselling of families of a child with sporadic tuberous sclerosis.

Separate chapters address neurological manifestations, epilepsy, autism, and intellectual problems of the condition, with attempts to understand and investigate the aetiology of these problems. This is followed by clear chapters on neuromaging and the role of positron emission tomography as a tool for diagnosing complications of the condition. Intriguingly, there is a rather old-fashioned picture of a ‘neuromagnetometer’ (p 65) whose function is rather obscure and may be obsolete.

Further chapters address other aspects of the clinical spectrum of complications, including dermatologic, renal, cardiac, and hepatosplenic involvement, although the possibility of renal cancer evolving from a benign kidney lesion should be discussed further because it is potentially serious. In general there is an under-emphasis on non-neurological clinical management and care pathways. The final chapter addresses genotype-phenotype correlations in a helpful way.

Overall, this is a very useful and comprehensive book with up-to-date molecular and diagnostic information which will be helpful to paediatricians, neurologists, geneticists, behavioural psychologists, radiologists, and others involved in the care of individuals with this serious and complex condition. It is particularly thorough on the neurological aspects of the disorder, and provides information about treatment, especially invasive aspects such as surgical treatment, but is somewhat lacking in other aspects of care.

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