

## Book Reviews

**AIDS AND THE NERVOUS SYSTEM. 2ND EDITION. 1996.** Edited By Joseph R. Berger & Robert M. Levy. Published by Lippincott-Raven. 800 pages. \$C150.00 approx.

The first edition of *AIDS and the Nervous System*, published in 1988, sought to serve both as a practical guide for both primary care providers and specialists caring for HIV-infected patients and also as a comprehensive reference for the evolving field of NeuroAIDS. Editors Rosenblum, Levy and Bredesen admirably achieved these goals. With publication of *AIDS and the Nervous System, second edition*, the editors are somewhat different, but the objectives for this extensively revised text remain the same. Berger and Levy incorporate into the new edition the significant gains in our understanding of HIV neurology in the 8 years between editions, while maintaining the balance between clinical utility and completeness that was the hallmark of the first edition.

Also carried forward to this newer edition are sections devoted to both symptoms-oriented and disease-specific analyses of HIV-related neurologic disorders, an organization that preserves the utility of the book for clinicians. New to the second edition, and reflecting advances in the field, are the evolution of a section on research topics to chapters reviewing HIV neuropathogenesis and the addition of a section on pathology. The number of chapters has increased significantly, with the additional chapters evenly dispersed among clinical, pathologic and scientific topics. The book is extremely well-referenced.

A distinguished collection of authors, representing many of the leading groups in NeuroAIDS, contributed to the text. Several chapters are particularly noteworthy. Brew and Tindall's "Neurological Manifestations of Primary HIV-1 Infection" clearly and concisely summarizes a topic that has not been reviewed comprehensively in the neurologic literature. In "Syphilis, HIV, and the Nervous System," Marra provides a thoughtful, critical and practical review of the sometimes conflicting literature of these frequently comorbid disorders. "Neurological Symptoms in HIV Infection" by Dal Pan, McArthur and Harrison outlines the approach to the HIV-infected patient with neurologic symptoms and Hollander's "Unusual opportunistic infections" reviews diagnostic possibilities for patients whose neurologic diagnosis remains elusive.

Criticisms are minor and few. Though probably unavoidable given the timing of this new edition, reference to protease inhibitors and combination antiretroviral therapy, now a cornerstone of HIV therapy, is conspicuously absent. Typographical errors in the first half of the book occur frequently enough to be at least mildly distracting. Even so, *AIDS and the Nervous System, second edition* succeeds as both an encyclopedic sourcebook and as a practical guide to evaluating and managing HIV-infected adults and children with neurologic symptoms and signs. As such, it will be useful for basic scientists seeking perspective on the clinical consequences of HIV virology and immunology as well as to primary care providers, neurologists, neurosurgeons, psychiatrists, neuroradiologists and neuropathologists participating the care of patients with HIV infection.

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**SEIZURES AND EPILEPSY IN CHILDHOOD: A GUIDE FOR PARENTS. 2ND EDITION. 1997.** By John M. Freeman, Eileen P.G. Vining and Diana J. Pillas. Published by Johns Hopkins Press. 320 pages. \$C22.00.

This clearly-written, informative manual is the second, revised edition of a deservedly popular layman's guide to epilepsy. Although directed toward parents of children with epilepsy and covering mainly pediatric aspects of epilepsy, there is much here which could benefit adult patients as well. The book is quite comprehensive and covers the gamut of information on epilepsy including a simplified discussion of pathophysiology, etiology, seizure phenomenology, diagnostic tests (including an excellent description of EEG), drug treatments and surgical therapy.

Fully one-third of the book is devoted to psychosocial and practical aspects of coping and living with epilepsy. In these sections, matters such as "what do you tell the school," coping with shattered expectations, overprotection and overindulgence of the child, sports and epilepsy, driving and epilepsy, marriage and pregnancy are discussed. The brief mention of the internet could have been expanded to include useful web sites for seeking further information.

The important topics of deciding whether to start anti-epileptic drugs and the approach to the single seizure, febrile seizures and discontinuation of anti-epileptic drugs are dealt with adequately.

Helpful features in this book are the frequent use of the question and answer format, inclusion of case examples and a glossary of medical terms. An informative chapter on the ketogenic diet, as would be expected from the authors who pioneered its use, is included. Occasional omissions or oversimplifications are found (eg., only generalized "spike-wave stupor" is discussed under non-convulsive status with no mention of complex partial status). By necessity the text carries an American bias, for example the inclusion of felbamate and the omission of clobazam, but this does not detract from its overall value.

Patients and families are increasingly avid seekers of information on epilepsy through printed materials, electronic media and the internet. For a reliable, readable and up-to-date source, this layman's manual stands toward the top of the heap and is heartily recommended.

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**EYELID MYOCLONIA WITH ABSENCES. 1996.** Edited by John S Duncan, CP Panayiotopoulos. Published by John Libbey & Company Limited. 122 pages. \$C43.00 approx.

Fifteen years ago I saw a 10-year-old girl in consultation for absence attacks associated with eyelid myoclonus. Her father assured me that there was no sense in treating the disorder – medications would not work. He knew because he had the same problem. He was in a rush to drive home! I had hoped that this book might address some of the questions raised by this special father-daughter pair.

This is a very specialized book about a very rare disorder. Unfortunately, there is not much new to say about eyelid myoclonia with absences that was not said by Dr. Peter Jeavons when he first described the condition in 1977. This book reports some of the deliberations of a symposium carried out at the Royal Society of

Medicine in London in 1995. There are 14 chapters with 6 co-authored by the tirelessly productive Dr. Panayiotopoulos. References are very up-to-date including several published after the symposium and some still in press. Dr. Jeavons outlines the syndrome clearly in chapter 2 – “eyelid myoclonia and absences show a marked jerking of the eyelids immediately after eye closure and there is an associated brief bilateral spike and wave activity”. He notes that many patients have additional, more conventional absence attacks without eyelid myoclonus. We learn in subsequent chapters that the spike wave is often photosensitive but eye closure is a critical, provocative event. Many patients respond to anti-absence medications, some do not. No one seems to have much experience with the disorder. Dr. Wallace from Cardiff describes her three cases and Dr. Zaiwalla describes three more cases from Oxford.

The disorder is compared with conventional absence and the evidence for photosensitivity versus fixation-off sensitivity is described. The reader is urged to perform special EEG studies with special glasses – “a practical method is to ask the patient to wear a pair of underwater goggles, which are fitted with +10 spherical lenses or semitransparent tape”. It would seem clear that the seizures in this disorder are truly precipitated by eye closure and not just the state of having eyes closed. Several authors conclude that the seizures in this particular disorder are not self-induced.

The book has two, more basic, chapters. Dr. Plant provides a useful introduction to the Anatomy and Physiology of the Eyelids. Dr. Harding carefully outlines issues about Eye Closure, EEG Abnormalities, Darkness, Fixation-off and Photosensitivity. The latter chapter is important reading for electroencephalographers.

Only a short chapter is devoted to the genetics and the chapter on treatment by Dr. Richens quickly notes that there are no randomized clinical trials on which to make firm recommendations. The cases discussed in other chapters suggest that sometimes the disorder does not respond to medication.

Overall, I thought that the material might have been more useful, if condensed to a brief review article. The physician struggling with a patient will learn that beyond the clinical description and EEG, not much is known. My patient's father drove home with his multiple brief absence attacks and did not return for follow up. Since then, I have not seen another case.

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**ECONOMIC EVALUATION OF EPILEPSY MANAGEMENT.** 1996. Edited by Ch Pachlatko and RG Beran. Published by John Libbey & Company Limited. 112 pages. \$C48.00.

This publication represents the proceedings of the Symposium on Economic Aspects of Epilepsy at the 21st International Epilepsy Congress in Sydney, 5 September 1995. It is multiauthored and divided into 9 chapters. This is an international perspective and very little relates to the Canadian health care system.

The proceedings address an important aspect of epilepsy management and can serve as a general guide to cost-benefit considerations in the medical and surgical treatment of epilepsy. Economic analysis of epilepsy care is a timely issue in view of the cost of the new antiepileptic drugs that have recently been introduced. Does the additional benefit of new antiepileptic drugs justify the additional cost? Not only is this information useful to treating physicians but authorities and governments who finance medical care are also interested in this question. It is important that financial considera-

tions alone do not restrict superior and ethical access to health care.

Chapter 1 addresses the economic aspect of epilepsy stressing the importance of economic arguments and gives an outline of cost-benefit evaluation. Chapter 2 reviews the models of economic appraisal using cost of illness and economic appraisal studies. Chapter 3 reviews the cost of epilepsy care in the United States. Chapters 4 and 5 assess the cost-benefit of the new antiepileptic drugs and the economic evaluation of antiepileptic drugs in general. Chapter 6 reviews the Australian experience in the introduction of new treatments. Chapter 7 is an economic appraisal of the introduction of vigabatrin into the Canadian health care system. This is based on data obtained from the Quebec provincial insurance plan using different scenarios and assumptions. The results may differ according to drug dose and drug response and the effect on quality of life and indirect costs are not considered. Accordingly it provides little useful data. Chapter 8 reviews employment and income after epilepsy surgery in Sweden and Chapter 9 reviews the health economic aspects of epilepsy surgery in Colombia.

The text sensitizes the reader to an important aspect of epilepsy care and presents an international perspective on how to take into consideration economic factors in the better and ethical treatment of epilepsy. The text provides useful information for physicians treating patients with epilepsy, hospital administrators and other decision makers in the health care industry. Specific pharmaco-economic data on the impact of the new antiepileptic drugs introduced in Canada are not provided.

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## Erratum

**MINIMALLY INVASIVE THERAPY OF THE BRAIN.** 1997. Edited by A. De Salles and R. Lufkin. Published by Thieme. 292 pages. \$C246.00 approx.

This book is a multi-authored volume edited by a neurosurgeon and a radiologist, on an extremely important direction in modern health care – that of minimally invasive therapy. There are 21 chapters by a total of 40 authors, primarily neurosurgeons, neuroradiologists and radiation oncologists from the United States and Germany. In the preface, the editors state that the book is designed to document the new techniques available for treatment of brain pathologies that are competitive with the traditional large surgical approaches and that it is directed at the appropriate specialists as well as primary care physicians and motivated lay persons. The two latter groups would very likely not find this book particularly useful. In the preface there are also two “advertisements” on how to get more information on the course the editors have conducted for 5 years, which this reviewer finds a little too commercial.

The book is generally well written and edited and contains much valuable information on the basic concepts and tools available within the current armamentarium of physicians and surgeons involved in minimally invasive treatment of a variety of morphological and functional conditions affecting the brain. The book is attractively laid out although a significant number of reproductions of imaging studies and other photographs and computer-generated graphics are of poor quality.

There are a number of conspicuous omissions from this text. Arguably the single most important building block for modern minimally invasive therapy was the development of framebased stereo-