

Books

Epileptic Seizures and Syndromes

Edited by P Wolf. Pp x + 673. Illustrated. £65. London: John Libbey. 1994. ISBN 0-86196-430-6.

There appears to be a trend towards paying greater attention to the epileptic syndromes, and this book serves to introduce an interesting collection of relevant reviews and original work. It is not an attempt to provide criteria and exhaustive detail for diagnosis, these being covered admirably in *Epileptic Syndromes in Infancy, Childhood and Adolescence*, also published by John Libbey and edited by Wolf and others, which Janz refers to as the 'guide bleu'.

Instead, the contributors raise discussion on a number of thought provoking issues, including difficulties with the current classification of seizures, primary idiopathic seizures which are not generalised but have regional manifestations, and the longitudinal evolution of the epileptic syndromes. The editor has made a useful attempt at bridging the gap between questions regarding the clinical expression of seizures and explanations arising from basic science work, although perhaps more questions are asked than answered.

The contributors, as would be anticipated, originated largely from Europe, and in certain cases, a poor command of English results in murky explanations of subtle concepts. Work from North America was frequently more helpful, such as Berkovic's concept of the epilepsies as a biological continuum, and Gloor's discussion of the pathophysiology of convulsive vs. non-convulsive generalised seizures. The idiopathic epilepsy syndromes are particularly well covered, and there is thoughtful presentation of current understanding and difficulties with the genetic characterisation of the syndromes. I had some problems with the usefulness of certain syndromes, both new (Perioral myoclonia with absence) and old (Grand Mal on Awakening); but here the trend in the book tends to be to encourage discussion, with editing necessarily at times relatively uncritical.

The section on symptomatic epilepsies is more straightforward and a few surgically-oriented chapters seem unnecessary, but there are again excellent reviews of secondary synchrony and slow spike and wave and of Rasmussen's encephalitis.

Overall, this is a most stimulating book, which contains a great deal of useful material, and should be read by all neurologists and those interested in epilepsy.

Jonathan Carr

How to Do It. Volume 3: Writing, Publishing and Publicity, Something Different*

Third edition. Edited by Deborah Reece. Pp xii + 250. £15. London: BMJ. 1995. ISBN 0-7279-0896-0.

The How to Do It series of books contains reprints of articles from the column of the same name in the *British Medical Journal*, and in the case of Volume 3, these have grouped

under the three sections of 'Writing', 'Publishing and publicity' and 'Something different'.

Within each of these, about a dozen different topics are covered, ranging from subediting, writing a book, writing an obituary and writing for money in section 1, to becoming a medical journalist, setting up a newsletter, getting a letter in the newspaper and giving a press conference in section 2, and — a very diverse selection — admitting you are wrong, being a patient, attending an inquest and commissioning a portrait in section 3.

Given the nature of the content, this is not a book to be read from cover to cover but to be dipped into, and none of the articles, which average around 7 pages in length (the shortest is 3 pages, the longest 14 pages), take more than a few minutes to read. Nevertheless, despite their brevity, they are comprehensive and informative, and are written in an easygoing and entertaining style; where necessary, the content has been revised and updated, or in some cases rewritten, for this new edition.

All of the topics covered are tasks that one might consider or be called upon to undertake as a professional, and for the newcomer to any of them, or for those who wish to brush up on their skills, this book will prove invaluable, while even the experienced would be likely to pick up new tips.

All in all, this would be a worthwhile addition to one's personal library.

Jonathan Spencer Jones

Books received

The receipt of these books is acknowledged, and this listing must be regarded as sufficient return for the courtesy of the sender. Books that appear to be of particular interest will be reviewed as space permits. The *SAMJ* does not publish unsolicited reviews.

The First Year of Life.* Fourth edition. By H. B. Valman. Pp. vi + 106. Illustrated. £14. London: BMJ. 1995. ISBN 0-7279-0897-9.

ABC of Sports Medicine.* Edited by Greg McLatchie, Mark Harries, John King and Clyde Williams. Pp. vii + 109. Illustrated. £16. London: BMJ. 1995. ISBN 0-7279-0844-8.

Major Incident Medical Management and Support. A Practical Approach.* Advanced Life Support Group. Pp. x + 205. Illustrated. £25. London: BMJ. 1995. ISBN 0-7279-0928-2.

Logic in Medicine.* Second Edition. Edited by Calbert I. Phillips. Pp. x + 208. Illustrated. £17. London: BMJ. 1995. ISBN 0-7279-0854-5.

Ethics in Emergency Medicine. Second Edition. By Kenneth V. Iserson, Arthur B. Sanders and Deborah Mathieu. Pp. xvii + 519. US\$39.95. Tucson, Arizona: Galen Press Ltd. 1995. ISBN 1-883620-14-7.

Health Consequences of the Chernobyl Accident. Results of the IPHECA pilot projects and related national programmes (Summary report). WHO. Pp. vi + 38. Illustrated. Sw.fr.11/US\$9.90. Geneva: WHO. 1995. ISBN 92-4-156181-5.

Nuclear Medicine: Science and Safety. By A. C. Perkins. Pp. x + 182. Illustrated. £24/US\$44. London: John Libbey & Co Ltd. 1995. ISBN 0-86196-470-5.

* Book titles marked may be ordered directly from MASA Publications, Book Department, Private Bag X1, Pinelands, 7430, tel. (021) 531-3081, fax (021) 531-4126, e-mail masact@aztec.co.za.

Continuous Spikes and Waves during Slow Sleep. Electrical Status Epilepticus during Slow Sleep. Acquired epileptic aphasia and related conditions. Mariani Foundation Paediatric Neurology: 3. Edited by A. Beaumanoir, M. Bureau, T. Deonna, L. Mira and C. A. Tassinari. Pp. xi + 255. Illustrated. £32/US\$59. London: John Libbey & Co Ltd. 1995. ISBN 086196-488-8.

Health-care Options for South Africa: Lessons from the UK and the USA. By W. Duncan Reekie. Pp. x + 116. R34,95. Sandton: The Free Market Foundation of Southern Africa. 1995. ISBN 1-874930-08-2.