Book reviews

Surgical Treatment of the Epilepsies. Edited by J Engel Jr. Pp 746: \$150 hardback. Raven Press, 1987. ISBN 0-88167-226-2.

This is a comprehensive account, provided by international experts in the field, of present day understanding and practice of the various surgical approaches to the treatment of the epilepsies. The book is not only concerned with surgical procedures. Along with excellent reviews of 'intractability', the natural histories and the clinical characteristics of the epilepsies concerned, there are discussions with extensive references of presurgical evaluation (including radiological investigations and neuropsychological assessment), extracranial and intracranial electroencephalographic recording and assessment of outcome from various points of view. Appendices are concerned with surgical techniques and presurgical assessment protocols in different epilepsy surgery centres in North America and Europe, and with kindling.

Many practical issues are covered including the indications for surgery. The overall place of epilepsy surgery in treatment might well be underestimated because of insufficient interest among neurosurgeons and a lack of familiarity with its potential value, perhaps especially in paediatrics. Important research topics are also identified including the relatively neglected areas of neuropsychological, psychiatric, and

social assessment before and after operation.

The book provides a very appropriate way of commemorating the publication in the *British Medical Journal* of 1886 of Victor Horsley's classic paper on brain surgery. It constitutes an excellent reference for all the disciplines involved in the surgical approach to the epilepsies.

G STORES

Sickle-Cell Anemia and Thalassemia: A Primer for Health Care Professionals. RG Huntsman. Pp 223: £5 (or \$10 US/Can) paperback. Canadian Sickle Cell Society, 1987. Available from: Canadian Sickle Cell Society, Sales-Despatch, PO Box 13156, Station A, St. John's, Newfoundland, A1B 4A4, Canada. ISBN 0-921037-00-7.

This book compresses an enormous range of clinical and scientific knowledge about the haemoglobinopathies into a compact format. The first third of the book, while concentrating on the clinical aspects of sickle cell disease and the thalassaemia disorders, also covers other less common haemoglobinopathies, including unstable haemoglobins, methaemoglobinaemia, and haemoglobins of altered oxygen affinity. The middle 35 pages are prefaced by the enigmatic statement that haemoglobin was described by the American physiologist LJ Henderson as the second most interesting

substance in the world. This section goes on to provide a crash course in protein biochemistry, haemoglobin function, red cell metabolism, and molecular biology as applied to haemoglobin. At the end of this section a number of illustrations (a table of amino acid substitutions in common abnormal haemoglobins, and 10 figures) are grouped together. The final 78 pages are devoted to an extensive glossary of clinical, biochemical, and genetic terms used in the field. The sides of the pages of the four main sections are marked to allow their easy identifications.

The title and preface indicate that the book is directed to those 'who care for the disease rather than those who suffer from it.' Its concise style will be heavy going for those without a scientific background, while medical readers should not expect more than very general guidance to the clinical management of patients and the problems presented by this group of disorders. Where drug treatment is mentioned the nomenclature is North American. The primer is at its strongest in the section dealing with laboratory diagnosis, the latter being nicely illustrated in application to a series of eight clinical problems to be found at the end of the first section. The book can be recommended as a remarkably inexpensive guide to the scientific background of the field.

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