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Book reviews

The Effective Clinical Neurologist, by Louis R. Caplan, Blackwell Scientific Publications, Cambridge, MA, 1990, 315 pages, $29.95.

Dr. Louis Caplan is well on his way to becoming one of the keepers of the light of clinical neurology because he articulates the need for preservation of the art, as well as the science of medicine as it applies to patients with disease of the nervous system. He first approached this responsibility from the viewpoint of the consultant interacting with the patient and with colleagues who may be responsible for patient management when, in 1988, he put out his well done volume, *Consultation in Neurology*, with co-author John J. Kelly. In this new offering, he augments the former with a pithy, readable and delightfully presented soft cover volume which can be perused in three evenings before being placed in ones library to be referred to repeatedly over time.

At the outset, Caplan refers to his roots in general medicine, psychiatry and then in neurology and pays tribute to his inspirational tutors. From them, he took what may have been their best and consolidated it into an original approach for the clinician neurologist.

Caplan begins with a slightly testy discussion of how new health care delivery systems, such as health maintenance organizations, commercial ventures in health care delivery, etc. have depersonalized medicine and are otherwise defective; then he continues by suggesting that neurology departments which have changed their name to Department of Neuroscience may be emphasizing the wrong aspect of the mission of clinicians, i.e., exemplary care of patients who have neurological disorders. Having set the tenor, he goes on to discuss patient encounters and methods for eliciting an accurate history, how to do an abbreviated, efficient neurologic examination without neglecting the essentials, what to record and how to record it, what tests are necessary and how to interpret them, and case examples which illustrate the methods he describes.

He then contrasts the interactions related to in-patient and out-patient care, as well as consultation and interrelationships with medical students, house officers, trainees, family members, as well as attorneys and other potentially adversarial groups.

Despite the fact that this volume could use some copy editing (surely to be corrected in the second edition) this is a volume which is to be enthusiastically endorsed and read by all who are, or will become, neurological clinicians.

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Diabetic Neuropathy, Edited by John Ward and Yoshio Goto, John Wiley & Sons, Chichester, 1990, 604 pages, $65

Over the past decade, the scope and complexity of diabetic neuropathy research has expanded tremendously. This book documents much of that expansion, representing a compilation of all material presented at a satellite meeting on diabetic neuropathy held in Singapore prior to the 1988 International Diabetes Federation Symposium. Over 275 authors contributed to the 71 presentations. These presentations were divided into seven sections with major emphasis on pathogenesis and potential treatments. Sections included presentations on morphology of human and animal nerves; aldose reductase inhibitors; vascular factors; measurement and quantitation; autonomic neuropathy; potential treatments, and a section devoted to the diabetic foot. Individual sections include papers on clinical, autonomic, quantitative sensory, and electrophysiologic evaluations, and the section on other potential treatments includes papers on the effects of methylcobalamin, gangliosides, and prostaglandin upon components of diabetic neuropathy.

Because of the editorial decision to accept all submitted material, there is predictable variability in the style and scope of individual papers. Nevertheless, the overall quality is good and most material is timely referenced and complete. One limitation is the redundancy of introductory information, with individual papers written to stand alone. Nevertheless, this redundancy makes interesting reading, and it is informative to see alternative perceptions and interpretations of the same material. This book contains few illustrations, and portions of the material could have been better summarized in tabular form. The book has a number of important attributes; in particular, the sections on morphology and pathogenesis provide an excellent summary of current knowledge. Although a unifying theme in diabetic neuropathy remains elusive, the controversy regarding a biochemical versus vascular etiology is well presented, but never critically discussed independent of presenting support for a given concept. One message derived from the combined presentations is that individual components of diabetic neuropathy may change as the disease progress. Failure to recognize such change may complicate our understanding of pathogenesis and treatment response, with some early changes being reversible and late changes irreversible. This may explain, in part, the failure of some agents of proven efficacy in animal models when used in human clinical trials. The section on the diabetic foot is filled with practical clinical information, both on prevention and treatment of the diabetic foot.

This book is not intended for a wide audience, but is best suited for the variety of specialists interested in diabetic neuropathy. This text is a good addition to the clinical and basic science literature on diabetic neuropathy literature. It should be viewed not as a comprehensive text, but as a compilation of presentations from an international meeting of experts interested in diabetic neuropathy.

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Steroids in Diseases of the Central Nervous System, edited by Rudy Capildeo, John Wiley & Sons, Chichester, New York, Brisbane, Toronto, Singapore, 1989, 306 pp., illustrated, £35.

This fine textbook contains 30 chapters detailing the basic science and use of steroids in diseases of the central nervous systems.