Book Reviews

PATHOGENESIS AND THERAPY OF DUCHENNE AND BECKER MUSCULAR DYSTROPHY. 1989. First edition. Edited by Byron A. Kakulas and Frank L. Mastaglia. Published by Raven Press. 287 pages.

This monograph is a summary of the proceedings of a "Workshop Symposium on the Etiology, Pathology, Diagnosis, and Possible Therapeutic Interventions Arising from the Recent Discoveries in the Molecular Genetics of the XP21.2 Muscular Dystrophies" (i.e., Duchenne and Becker dystrophies) held at Perth, W.A. in February, 1989.

The first section of this volume describes the molecular genetics of XP21.2 muscular dystrophies and the cell biology of dystrophin. In Sections 2 and 3 of the book, the contributors consider the pathogenesis and pathology of Duchenne and Becker muscular dystrophies as well as previous therapeutic trials and current research on interventional strategies for these disorders in the context of the recent discovery of dystrophin deficiency. In addition to the annotated discussions which follow each individuals section, Section 4 summarizes the "Round Table" discussions of the symposium. Major conclusions and recommendations for future research are highlighted in the final section (Section 5).

The editors of this volume have achieved an enviable compilation of current investigations and opinions of the leading world authorities in both clinical and basic molecular aspects of Duchenne and Becker dystrophies. The time constraints for individual presentations imposed by the workshop format is suited ideally to concise, clear formulation of current research interests of individual investigators. The Round Table discussions by the experts represent an invaluable aspect of this book which permit less structured discussion of the more speculative aspects of current research. As such, they provide glimpses of the possibilities for future directions of research which should provide an invaluable stimulus to other scientists and molecular geneticists using recombinant DNA technology to investigate neuromuscular disorders. Furthermore, these panel discussions serve to clarify major points for the clinical neurologist who may be involved in the care of such patients, but who may be less familiar with the complex aspects of molecular genetics. However, it is possible that minor difficulties may be experienced by more clinically-oriented readers of this volume. Thus, Section 1 requires such a high level of specialized knowledge of molecular genetics that it may be somewhat overwhelming for the more clinically-oriented reader. However, perseverance is well worthwhile, in that the later sections focus principally on the clinical applications of this genetic technology.

In summary, this volume is recommended highly. It is written well in a readable style and will undoubtedly appeal to a wide readership, which should include basic scientists and clinical neurologists as well as others who are involved in the care of patients with muscular dystrophy. It provides an excellent discussion of the current understanding of dystrophin deficiency, which undoubtedly represents one of the major medical breakthroughs of this decade.

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THE MEDICAL INTERVIEW: THE THREE-FUNCTION APPROACH. 1991. By Steven A. Cohen-Cole. Published by Mosby Year Book Inc. 197 pages.

Communication with patients is an art form which has scientific objectives. It is the most important aspect of a physician's interaction with patients. Yet so often it is assumed that medical students and graduate clinical trainees are competent in their communication skills, and much more attention is paid to training of scientific aspects of diagnosis and treatment. It is well known that poor communication with patients is the most frequent underlying fault in complaints against physicians. Text books of this type help physicians to learn that a satisfied patient is as important as a medically improved patient.

The author of this brief text is a psychiatrist who points out that medical interview techniques can be considered in three separate and important categories namely data gathering, rapport and support of the patient's emotions, and counselling or education of patients regarding their illness. The work "doctor" derives from Latin usage, meaning "teacher". Teaching our patients about their illnesses generally does less harm, has fewer undesirable side effects and certainly costs less than most pharmacological forms of management.

Dr. Cohen-Coles' book outlines the three domains of medical interviewing, and provides structure and wording for questions relating to past medical history, family history, review of systems and mental status evaluation. Four chapters are of particular value in dealing with the emotional responses of patients, difficult interviews with histrionic patients, hostile patients, and other commonly encountered "difficult" patient interviews.

The target readership for this book is said to be the medical student. Some of the text is at a very fundamental level of communication, but other aspects are likely to be appreciated only by physicians who have been in practice for some time, for example sections on countertransference and patient motivation. Inevitably, the background of the author produces a text of interest to psychiatrists, and perhaps of some value in clinical neurology. Physicians in organ-specific or technical specialities are likely to be disappointed in the limited attention paid to medical interviewing techniques in their specialities.

Most undergraduate medical students will find a more concise and helpful guide to medical interview methods in the standard clinical skills textbooks. This book would be of greater value to junior residents in one of the clinical neurosciences. Physicians who have been in practice for a few years would undoubtedly benefit from reading this book, in helping them reflect on their own interviewing techniques, be they for estab-

lishment of rapport with the patient, for diagnosis or for counselling.

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STEVE: REMEMBRANCES OF STEPHEN W. KUFFLER. 1990. Edited by U.J. McMahan. Published by Sinauer Associated Inc. 141 pages. $16 Cdn. approx.

Kuffler, the founding chairman of the Department of Neurobiology at Harvard University died just over 10 years ago, in October 1980. He is considered by many to have been the dominant figure during the 1960's and 70's in the field of neuroscience when it was emerging as a new discipline in its own right. Students whose knowledge of the scientific literature is limited to the recent years covered by computer searches might wonder "why all the fuss?". A few hours spent with this short book will be well worth their time in acquainting them with the many fundamental contributions made by this remarkable scientist in areas of neuroscience as diverse as transmitter identification, the discovery of retinal receptive fields and the discovery of the intrafusal motor system. Although this volume does contain a standard, brief biography (compiled by Sir Bernard Katz), its foremost attraction is its format which consists mostly of a collection of letters and remembrances from former students, colleagues and friends of Kuffler. These vignettes reveal Kuffler as a warm hearted teacher and friend as well as an outstanding scientist whose passion for his science went hand in hand with his love and enjoyment of life. They show that science could be fun and create in the mind of this reviewer a sense of nostalgia for that time when the quest for grant monies did not compete with the desire to pursue a fundamentally interesting problem not necessarily related to the "disease du jour".

Many of Kuffler's colleagues and postdoctoral fellows are now leaders of modern neuroscience. It goes without saying that their memories of Kuffler and their recounting of their interactions with him reveal as much about themselves as it does about Kuffler. So, for the reader who may have wondered about modern scientific personalities, this is the chance to get to know them better through their own words – people like Hunt, Hubel, Wiesel, Nicholls, Kravitz, Furshpan, Gershenfeld, Cohen, Spitzer, van Essen, Patterson, Purves, to name but a few. Many readers will wish that their names could also have been on that list of students and colleagues. They should read the book, it's the next best thing.

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HANDBOOK OF MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS. 1990. Edited by Stuart D. Cook. Published by Marcel Dekker Inc. 528 pages. $138 Cdn.

This volume consists of a collection of reviews, many by the acknowledged experts in their respective fields. The volume covers most of the major topics of contemporary relevance to multiple sclerosis (MS). The first half of the book deals with contributions of epidemiology, genetics, virology and immunology to the cause and pathogenesis of MS. One chapter is devoted to the clinical aspects of the disease. Pathology and basic electrophysiology of demyelination are each reviewed in one chapter. Clinically-applicable tests for MS, including CSF analysis, evoked potentials and neuroimaging are each covered in a separate chapter. Finally, the major conventional treatment for MS, corticosteroids, and many research-based treatments (e.g. immunosuppressants, interferons, monoclonal antibodies, etc.) are each reviewed in separate chapters.

The chapters are generally well written and referenced and provide up-to-date information on the topics covered. Some subjects are covered in greater detail, whereas some, obviously due to limitations of space and the emphasis of the volume, are only superficially covered (e.g. clinical aspects). The treatment of each subject conforms to generally accepted concepts established by the leaders of MS research of the last decade. Similar presentations of the same material is generally available in other volumes or in journal reviews by the same authors. The material is not synthesized so as to address both sides of controversial issues such as: What is the relative magnitude of genetic and environmental contributions to the etiology of MS? How convincing is the evidence supporting a viral etiology? What is the optimum treatment for the steroid-unresponsive patient with MS?

The section on therapeutics reviews a large number of studies that deal with a broad variety of different therapeutic modalities. The introduction on the conduct of trials in MS and quantitation of disease activity is far too brief and superficial. A discussion of the goals of treatment (e.g., prevention of attacks, preventing the progressive phase of MS, treating the progressive phase) would have been a valuable introduction for the clinician who is not an expert in these issues.

The volume is of value to the neurologist with a general interest in MS, who wishes to have a collection of updated, well-referenced reviews on a variety of subjects surrounding the cause and treatment of MS. It is not of great value to the clinician looking for a clinical resource for the care of patients as the rather misleading title "Handbook of Multiple Sclerosis" might suggest. Nor is it particularly useful for the MS investigator, who would likely have similar chapters by the same authors in other volumes in his library.

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ESSENTIALS OF CHILD NEUROLOGY. 1990. By Suresh Kotagal. Published by Ishiyaku EuroAmerica, Inc., St. Louis, Tokyo. 192 pages. $51 Cdn. approx.

A surprisingly large amount of practical, factual neurological data is contained within the 192 pages of this short textbook. The book is directed toward general paediatricians, adult neurologists who occasionally consult on paediatric patients, and especially trainees in these two disciplines; it also could serve as an initial introductory text for paediatric neurology residents. A broad overview of the most common clinical problems in child neurology is presented in a lucid and easily readable text supplemented by flow charts for diagnostic investigations of presenting symptoms and signs such as developmental regression and macrocephaly, readily understandable tables, and carefully cho-