Book Reviews


With a solid basis of neuroanatomy and neurophysiology, clinical neurology is not more difficult than other medical specialties. Yet, all readers in neurology are aware of the lack either of a solid background of neuroanatomy and neurophysiology among students or of their inability to combine the basic facts with clinical observations. The book by Schade is intended to fill this gap. In the first part on neuroanatomy and neurophysiology, the basic facts are collected and illustrated by a number of excellent figures. In the second part on clinical neurology the author tries the same straight-forward approach. The experienced neurologist will acknowledge that most of the chapters are well written, but he will perhaps not accept a few oversimplifications in the text. Fig. 74b seems to me to be misleading and some therapeutic details are superfluous in this context. In spite of these few critical remarks the general impression is good and the book can be recommended to students in medicine and for the repetition of the basic facts of neurology.

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The author's main concern is his conviction, that many a diagnosis is missed not because of lack of laboratory facilities, but because of lack of a systematic, careful and considerate evaluation of all the steps of establishing a diagnosis. In the first part of his book Ianzen systematically exhibits the different steps of the diagnostic procedure with their shortcomings: poor definition (with all those terms ending with -oid, -forme or initiating with pseudo- etc.), sticking too much to a once-established diagnosis, poor personal history, overestimation of the guiding and underestimation of minor symptoms; wrong interpretation of the natural course of the disease; insufficient physical and psychiatric examination with particular reference to neurology.

The author illustrates his points with 106 case histories. Some are given in detail, some in the form of epicritic summaries and a few are reduced to just one sentence. The cases cover most of the topics in neurology. The majority of the examples is well chosen in order to illustrate one or another error of the diagnostic process; a few, however, are not wholly convincing, either because no diagnosis has ever been established or because essential symptoms or laboratory data are not mentioned.

It is not the author's intention to publish a manual of differential diagnosis but rather to improve our methods of teaching, learning and practicing medicine, particularly neurology. There can be no question that modern medicine needs these reforms. The book can be recommended not only to neurologists but also to teachers and students in internal medicine.

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