Book Reviews


This book represents the co-operative effort of 35 contributors mainly from Swiss, Austrian, German and Scandinavian hospitals. The title projects the aims of the work; to lead the doctor from signs and symptoms towards the correct diagnosis. It is therefore the clinician’s book and various chapters reflect this attitude.

Although the individual chapters are excellent and some of them outstanding, this is a difficult book to recommend to the uninitiated. It contains many valuable descriptions of various symptoms but there is a general lack of editorial discipline which hampers the arrangement of the subject-matter.

The geriatric physician will find in it a chapter by A.L. Vischer who deals in a forthright manner with the symptomatology of the diseases of old age.

The book is an excellent work of reference reflecting Central European practice. There are ample references to British and American literature, in addition to French and German. There is an adequate index, the typography and the coloured plates are very good indeed.


This wellknown textbook by H. Wildbolz has been entirely re-written by his son. It is an interesting book for the Geriatrician who wants to inform himself of current practice in the field of urology.

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The introductory chapters deal with methods of examination, including the routine tests used in the author’s clinic. The laboratory part is somewhat flat, but as soon as the clinical chapters are reached, the book comes to life. It embodies the surgical experiences of two generations of urologists. The style is clear and concise. The author never strays far from his personal experience and the book gains by this immediacy of approach. It matters therefore little whether the embryology of the kidney or the laboratory investigations are not quite up-to-the-minute. On the other hand, it gives the best account of the usual urological conditions, without overcrowding them with details and with plenty of common sense.

The chapters on prostatic hypertrophy, urinary retention and incontinence are particularly valuable because of their good judgement. Oddly enough the author does not discuss the choice of anaesthesia in prostatic patients, a problem which troubles most geriatric physicians at some time.

There is an adequate index, but unfortunately the author has followed the continental practice of referring to authors by name only, thereby diminishing the value of the book to those who seek further information. Typography and illustrations are very satisfactory.
There is, as far as the reviewer knows, no comparable book in the English language balancing as nicely as Wildbolz does, between the shorter article of the surgical textbook and the cumbersome tome of the super-specialist.


Obliterative disease is more than peripheral disease, it includes practically all vascular diseases. The authors have been very thorough, starting with an historical introduction and general pathology, discussing the special pathology in great detail, although what is said in this first part of the book can be found elsewhere. The chapter on histological findings after vascular transplantation is particularly valuable. The same applies to the chapter on processes of obliteration in artificial transplants. The general regulation of blood flow is very adequately dealt with, particularly the estimation of the effect or otherwise of vaso-dilatory substances, which on the whole are rejected by the authors as of little use. The treatment of oblitative conditions follows conventional lines. One feels that the authors are sitting too much on the fence without giving a clear lead as to what should or should not be done.

An interesting sub-section of this chapter is that of prognosis and rehabilitation.

The chapter on surgical treatment by Jean Kunlin is most interesting and falls into three distinct parts.

The first is concerned with the causal therapy of progressive oblitative vascular disease and recommends adrenalectomy. Kunlin does a uni-lateral adrenalectomy with sympathectomy and if the condition does not improve, he does the other side as well, in which case he prefers a subtotal resection to a total one, leaving about one tenth of the glands. Oddly enough he mentions such obsolete procedures as splanchnicotomy and parathyroidectomy. Ganglionectomy is very adequately dealt with.

The second part deals with local restoration of the blood flow including thrombendarteriectomy and transplantation both with grafts and artificial material. He prefers dacron, which he uses as direct substitute and for bypass operation.

Finally there is a chapter on the assessment of oblitative vascular disease for the purposes of insurance and compensation. Each chapter is followed by a representative collection of recent references.

Print, index and general layout are very satisfactory. The book is full of useful personal clinical findings and deserves to be widely read by those who are interested in the subject. For the geriatrician its value is somewhat limited because the surgical help which the middle-aged nowadays get from vascular surgery is not yet available to the over-seventies to the same extent.


Anthony Richardson suffered a stroke which left him partly paralysed. The medical and therapeutic treatment he received overlooked the mundane problems of washing himself and tying shoelaces unaided. Such problems assume enormous proportions for those who are partly disabled, yet whose self-esteem could not brook a complete reliance on other people. He was determined to return to an independent way of life and this short book is his personal account of how it was accomplished.
He describes in detail the carefully planned routine of washing, shaving and dressing himself. Between these matter-of-fact lines one can read that the fundamental factors in his success were the faith and self-discipline without which all else is nothing. “Never Say Die” is valuable both as a practical manual and as an inspiration for those who are similarly afflicted, and for those whose lives are linked with the partly disabled.

Amnestische Psychosyndrome im mittleren und höheren Lebensalter. Psychopathologische Untersuchungen an Alkoholikern, Senilen, Hirntraumatikern und anderen mit diffusen Hirnschädigungen. Springer-Verlag, Berlin 1959. VIII + 177 S., 23 Abb., DM 48.-. This volume contains a painstaking psychometric study of Korsakoff’s syndrome (here called amnestic psychosyndrome) on a group of 45 patients, all of them elderly, some of them very old. The author stresses the importance of the premorbid personality and the reaction to stress. Age plays a significant role in the development of the syndrome, the more severe cases being observed in the 7th and 8th decade. There are transitions between the syndrome and organic dementia.

This is an interesting contribution to the understanding of some aspects of confusional states in the elderly. The references are entirely to the German literature, the psychometric testing is based on conventional continental standards.

Handbuch der Psychologie. Edited by David Katz and Rosa Katz, 2nd Edition. Benno Schwabe & Co., Basel/Stuttgart 1960. 666 p., 60 fig., sFr. 38.-. This recent second edition of the well-known textbook by the late Prof. Katz is extremely well written and is a mine of information on recent trends in psychology. Of particular interest to the gerontologist is a short essay on Psychology of Ageing which in the space of seven pages describes the psychological problems which involve the elderly. Good as this is, it is not good enough and in particular does not give any practical hints as to the application of modern psychological methods in the diagnosis of psychological disturbances in the elderly.

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The book as a whole, however, will satisfy those geriatricians who are interested in the subject by its wide sweep which does not only include the anthropological and religious psychology but also devotes a chapter to propaganda and another one to para-psychology. It can be recommended to all interested in the subject. The German is clear and easy to understand and the production of the book is excellent.