Recent developments in functional and surgical domains continuously add new aspects in the management of the epileptic patient. Since, in everyday practice, epileptology predominantly remains a clinical branch, in which complementary investigations – apart from EEG and classical neuroimaging – are not routinely used, issues focussing on new pharmacologic treatments, but also on data about other more performing and/or invasive approaches, are of great concern for the treating neurologist.

This book is conceived for a global approach of the treatment of patients with epilepsy. It starts with a section about basic mechanisms (cellular implication in epileptogenesis, developmental and genetic aspects), then includes a compact but well-structured recall of the principles of electroencephalography, completed by an EEG atlas of epileptiform abnormalities.

A large section discusses the classification of seizures and epileptic syndromes which constitutes the main rationale for treatment. The following chapters about antiepileptic pharmacotherapy are subdivided into general and epidemiological principles, and a detailed description of each substance, with emphasis on the newer drugs. An exhaustive section is further dedicated to epilepsy surgery. Discussion on psychosocial aspects concerning epileptic patients closes the overview.

Many international leading experts contributed to this work; this aspect is reflected by a high scientific quality throughout the book. Moreover, practical and detailed information about the management of seldom syndromes is of great clinical usefulness. Exhaustive references at the end of each chapter allow easy finding of relevant literature for the specially interested reader. Nevertheless, some pitfalls are inherent to works written by many authors: information on some issues, as for example on epilepsy partialis continua (Kozewnikow) is redundant or scattered in more than one chapter. Furthermore, as epileptology is a vital branch with a quick development, owing to its publication year (2001), the book lacks some recent aspects about deep brain stimulation and treatment indications concerning some of the newest antiepileptic drugs.

But, apart from these minor points, this work is of an extremely valuable help for neurologists, as it covers much more than the ‘treatment of epilepsy’, strictly speaking. It gives solid information about fundamental, epidemiological, nosological, and electroencephalographic aspects, as well as about special investigation workups, integrating these points with current knowledge concerning pharmacological and nonpharmacological treatments of epilepsy, thus covering in an excellent manner the wide field of epileptology.

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New Trends in Cerebral Aneurysm Management

Acta Neurochirurgica, Supplement 82
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132 pp.; EUR 76.00

This volume of Acta Neurochirurgica Supplements contains the proceedings of the Swiss-Japanese Joint Conference on Cerebral Aneurysm Management held in Zürich, Switzerland, in May 2000. The book gives a good update on the present standards and controversies in the management of ruptured and unruptured intracranial aneurysms. As always in congress proceedings, the quality of the contributions is variable, with some of them presenting only preliminary results. The book is divided into two main parts.

The first part is entirely devoted to the problem of unruptured intracranial aneurysms. This subject has been highly debated since the publication of the International Study of Unruptured Intracranial Aneurysms (ISUIA) in 1998. The ISUIA found a very low rate of ruptures for aneurysms smaller than 10 mm (0.005% per year), questioning the necessity of treating such aneurysms. The first three contributions of the book summarize the preliminary results of a Japanese study on unruptured aneurysms undertaken in 1999 after the publication of ISUIA. Among the first 427 patients enrolled, the Japanese study found a global rupture rate of 3.2% per year, which is higher than in the ISUIA and more in accordance with the previous literature. The general recommendation of actively treating unruptured intracranial aneurysms is still advocated by neurosurgeons provided the risks of the intervention are reasonably low. Concerning the natural history of unruptured aneurysms, S. Juvela reports that current smoking is the only known risk factor significant for aneurysm formation, growth and rupture. Female gender is associated with a higher risk of de novo formation and increasing size of aneurysm fundus positively correlates with the risk of rupture.

The second part of the book covers different aspects of the treatment of aneurysmal subarachnoid hemorrhage. The contribution of Y. Kaku provides objective and comprehensive information on the current indications, results, and complications of endovascular therapy for intracranial aneurysms. Coil embolization protects effectively against the acute risk of recurrent rupture, provided initial filling of the aneurysm sac was complete. The results of endovascular therapy need long-term confirmation; however, progress in the field is constant and we expect new, better, and safer possibilities of aneurysm obliteration in the near future. In the last contribution, Y. Yonekawa and colleagues present their experience with the management of difficult aneurysms and summarize the surgical refinements they developed in Zürich during the last decade. The descriptions and recommendations are of particular interest for vascular neurosurgeons confronted with similar problems.

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Childhood Headache
Clinics in Developmental Medicine, No. 158
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This book, volume No. 158 in the series Clinics in Developmental Medicine, is divided into 14 chapters, written by an international panel of 12 authors from the UK, US, Finland and The Netherlands. The editor is author or co-author of several chapters. The introduction stresses the importance of headaches in pediatric practice, the major contributions of the International Headache Society in defining diagnostic criteria and classifying headaches in adults and in children, and the need for modified criteria in children with migraine.

Large chapters are devoted to the epidemiology of headaches and pathophysiology of migraine. Further research is necessary in order to understand the neuronal and vascular mechanisms underlying aura and headaches and their link.

The book is easy to read, but it often lists series of occasionally conflicting results, making it difficult to pick up the essential message. Thus several chapters contain almost as many pages of references than of text. Therefore this book appears to be more valuable for the physician with a particular interest in headaches, looking for answers to specific questions, than for the general practitioner and pediatrician who might miss guidelines summarizing the authors' experience. The discussions on abdominal migraine and on psychological treatment appear disproportionately long and somewhat confusing, whereas a short paragraph only is devoted to menstrual migraine, and has been misplaced in a chapter on rare causes of childhood headache, which also includes frequent causes of symptomatic headaches. The link between migraine and epilepsy deserves more discussion, since most authors do not consider these entities as coincidental diseases in the same patient, but rather as comorbidities sharing common mechanisms. The final chapter on headache clinics repeats many previous statements regarding workup. It is well stressed that the great majority of headaches in children are benign, that the diagnosis relies on history and clinical examination, and that additional studies, in particular MRI, are only rarely indicated.

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