

Alzheimer's Disease: Biology, Diagnosis and Therapeutics

Edited by K. Iqbal, B. Winblad, T. Nishimura, M. Takeda and H. Wisniewski. 1997. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons. 831 pp. £140 (hb)

There is no shortage of books on dementia in general and Alzheimer's disease in particular, ranging from detailed specialist texts to general advice for carers. If literary sales are an indication of the popularity of a condition, then dementia is coming of age. Conferences abound in exotic parts of the world and conference proceedings often follow. It is from this stable that the current text originates, representing some 99 of the 800 abstracts presented at the Fifth International Conference on Alzheimer's Disease in Osaka, Japan.

A predictably wide range of topics selected carefully by the editors appears in bite-sized pieces with reassuring heterogeneity of language, style and content. What is particularly interesting about dementia is the range of techniques which can be thrown at the disorder, ranging from impressive molecular biology and the ubiquitous transgenic mouse, to psychosocial interventions based in nursing homes to ameliorate behavioural problems. The emphasis in this text is understandably towards the former, while not completely ignoring the latter. A bit like a comic bought for holidays as a child, there is something for everybody (including nice pictures). There certainly is something new in almost every contribution and the range is impressive.

I think the style works well, as this is mid-way between an authoritative text and a flimsy abstract book. It is probably not a

book that will stand the test of time but I am proud to have the last three editions on my bookshelves. It would be an important book for a departmental library to carry if they have any pretensions to support readers interested in the dementias. When I reviewed one of the previous editions, I dropped a casual hint at the apparent delay between the conference and publication, prompting a mild rebuke from the publishers, extolling their speed and efficiency. Being more experienced now in writing and publishing, I can see their point and congratulate the publishers on such an efficient turn-round of their material. Only the editors know who failed to deliver but the book certainly summarises in a very readable and up-to-date manner many areas of work in dementia of which any self-respecting interested party should be aware.

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Antidepressants: New Pharmacological Strategies

Edited by Phil Skolnick. Totowa, NJ: Humana Press. 320 pp. US\$99.50 (hb). ISBN 0-89603-469-0

This is a multi-author text edited by a senior scientist from the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda. The stated objective

is to bring together novel concepts of antidepressant therapy and to attempt to exploit new insights gained from the laboratory to improve current treatments. The result is a text which reviews most of the field very well indeed. Although, almost by definition, it is a specialist text, there is much in this book that the general psychiatrist could profit from. Many of the chapters summarise the background to antidepressant development and novel strategies, some in a masterly way. The standard is high and most contributors are recognised experts in their fields. Gover's chapter on 'Reversible inhibitors of monoamine oxidase A' and Paul *et al's* 'Molecular strategies' were a delight to read and are lucid enough to be given to trainees or undergraduates. However, no book, especially not a multi-author text, is perfect and I have two criticisms. First, there are three chapters on *N*-methyl-D-aspartate antagonists which, even though it is a special interest of the editor, is still probably one too many. Second, there is no chapter explicitly devoted to brain corticosteroid receptors, although references are made to this key area in other chapters. Such a contribution would have been most timely as there is currently great interest in developing new antidepressant strategies based in this area. Despite this, this book is to be recommended to departmental libraries and I feel that any interested student would benefit from reading it.

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