

CONTROVERSIES IN CENTRAL AUDITORY PROCESSING DISORDER

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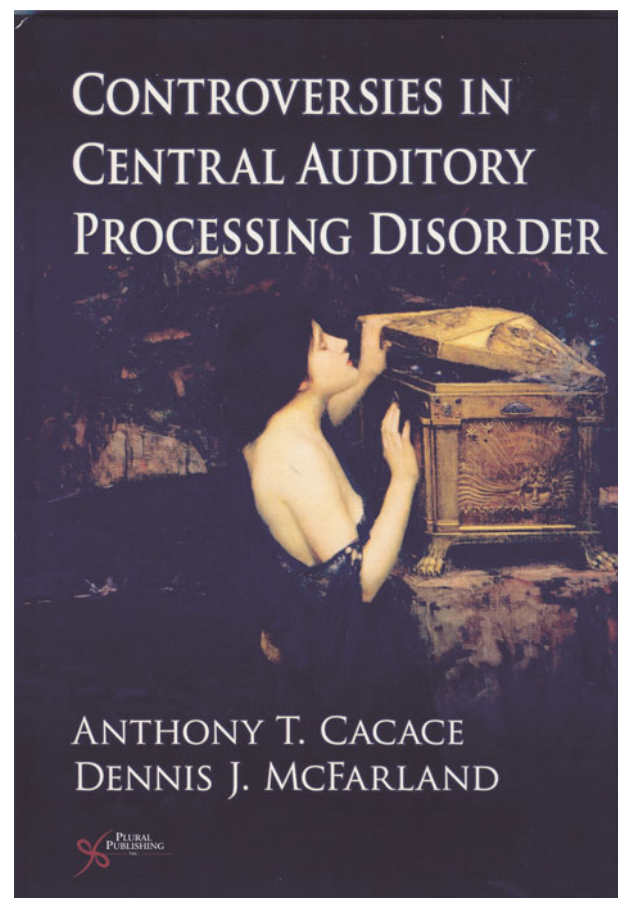
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This is a very interesting book, which differs from others on this subject in that it is not a 'clinical cookbook' on how to diagnose those suspected of central auditory processing disorder. It neither promises nor delivers a consensus statement on a test battery for diagnosing the disorder. It does start by discussing what appear to be three divergent ways to explain this condition: (1) an audiological path, (2) a psycho-educational path and (3) a developmental path.

The book includes several chapters that discuss what is known about the auditory nervous system, from recent animal work as well as human studies, using functional imaging modalities. Chapters are not limited to topics directly related to central auditory processing disorder but address multiple clinical entities, including auditory neuropathy, specific learning difficulties and tinnitus. There is a chapter dedicated to age-related changes in auditory ability. There is a section on epidemiology and another on tests to diagnose central auditory processing disorders. Arguments are made both for and against using linguistic stimuli in the central auditory processing disorder test battery. There is a chapter on the current generation of speech discrimination tests; it discusses the fact that these tests are far from perfect in identifying subtle changes in speech discrimination problems, in those with peripheral hearing loss, and have significant limitations as tools with which to identify auditory processing problems. There is even a chapter on the processing of music in various clinical populations.

In short, it appears that central auditory processing disorder means different things to different people! The strength of this book is that it clearly points out that 'the emperor has no clothes'. I am not sure if I came away from reading this book feeling a little depressed about the lack of agreement, or feeling hopeful that clinicians, audiologists, educationalists and language pathologists are



coming together to offer new views, rather than depending on untested theories. I only hope that consensus on this difficult condition will emerge in the next few years and that the next edition of this book will reflect this consensus, as regards the definition, test battery, underlying mechanisms and treatments for central auditory processing disorders. But then again, as a fledgling golfer, I am an eternal optimist.

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