

Paediatric Epilepsy. Edited by MATTI SILLANPÄÄ, SVEIN I. JOHANNESSEN, GÖSTA BLENNOW and MOGENS DAM. Petersfield: Wrightson Biomedical Publishing. 1990. 377 pp. £45.00.

Considerable advance in the field of epilepsy has occurred in all age groups over the past 10 years, from the understanding of basic mechanisms to the use of newer imaging techniques. There are also signs that, as in other areas of medicine, molecular genetics will have an impact. In addition, newer anticonvulsants have been introduced. At this juncture, an update in paediatric epilepsy is clearly needed and this volume has much to offer, being conceived as a book rather than a collation of conference presentations. It consists of 37 chapters, some relatively short, but all succinct; the work of 41 contributors, nine from the USA, the remainder from Scandinavia. This point is neatly side-stepped in the preface by the statement that the book represents the view of Scandinavian experts. The preface also contains the disclaimer that the editors have not attempted conformity of opinion, which in fact adds to the value of the book.

It starts with five chapters on basics, epidemiology, pathology and genetics. Then follow 12 chapters on particular disorders ranging from neonatal seizures to benign partial epilepsy, and including sections on progressive conditions. There are four chapters on investigation including imaging methods and electroencephalogram (EEG). In the latter there could have been more emphasis on ambulatory monitoring and split-screen video presentation of patient and EEG, although this is mentioned elsewhere. Drug treatment and surgery are then covered. Then, there follow four chapters on what is called 'habilitation'. In spite of the oddness of the word it is quite clear that it concerns overall management as well as organisation of services. The book ends with chapters on discontinuation of anticonvulsants and prognosis. Each chapter is self-sufficient with its own good bibliography and there are appropriate illustrations including some in colour. A strong introduction and a concluding chapter would have been helpful, as would the grouping of the chapters into subsections.

The volume is well presented and comprehensive as well as up-to-date, and it is warmly welcomed.

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Depression in Mentally Retarded Children and Adults. Edited by ANTON DOSEN and FRANK MENOLASCINO. Leiden: Logon Publications. 1990. 362 pp. 95df/ \$50.00.

This book joins a growing number of publications on psychiatric aspects of mental handicap. The Editors have attempted to draw together perspectives on depres-

sive illness in mentally retarded people from several professional disciplines including child and adult psychiatry, educational psychology, child development and neurology, epidemiology, counselling and clinical chemistry. The result is a patchy, repetitive book which purports to be scientific but which ends up by being speculative in parts, uneven in quality and too often full of jargon.

There are some good contributions, however, particularly the chapters on clinical findings by Day, on biochemical studies by Ruedrich, on bipolar disorders by Sovner and on behavioural treatments by Benson. Some of the chapters on psychological and psychotherapeutic treatments such as relationship, milieu, developmental and symbolic-interactional therapy, are also intriguing. It would be more convincing, however, if these treatment methods were allowed to stand in their own right and were not pressed into service as treatments for depression. For example, it is very difficult to accept the diagnosis of major affective illness in a severely mentally retarded, non-verbal, non-mobile three-year-old child, on the clinical grounds stated, although there is no difficulty in accepting that the child improved with relationship therapy.

It is easy to be dismissive of this book, but that would be ungenerous. It is a genuine and well intentioned effort to convey the experience of depression from the mentally retarded individual's viewpoint, and some of the case vignettes are moving and authentic. It is client-centred and eminently caring and that alone makes it worthwhile. We are, however, now seeing a developing tendency to overdiagnose mental illness in mentally retarded people, and yet again, in a new context, to overmedicalise the subject. I doubt whether there is, in fact, enough quality research to justify a full length book on depression in mentally retarded people as yet.

Despite its scientific shortcomings, I think this book would be of interest to any professional involved in caring for mentally handicapped people in whom depression of mood and unhappiness may be a problem. I could not, however, recommend it as a suitable text for examination candidates.

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Creative Arts and Mental Disability: The Role of the Creative Arts in the Development of Young People and Adults with Mental Handicaps and Severe Profound or Multiple Disabilities. Edited by STANLEY S. SEGAL. Bicester, Oxon: A.B. Academic Publishers. 1990. 115 pp. £15.95.

This book describes the proceedings of an International Symposium and Festival of Arts held in London at the King's Fund Centre and the Cockpit Theatre exploring the creative arts with people with mental disabilities.