

REFLEX EPILEPSIES: PROGRESS IN UNDERSTANDING, 2004. Edited by Peter Wolf, Yushi Inoue, Benjamin Zifkin. Published by John Libbey Eurotext. 156 pages. C\$125 approx.

Seizures precipitated by defined stimuli are relatively rare. However, as several authors of this monograph emphasize, these seizure types offer unique opportunities to study basic mechanisms of epilepsy. This small volume is derived from a 2001 meeting on the reflex epilepsies held at the 12th International Bethel-Cleveland Epilepsy Symposium in Bielefeld, Germany. The book contains 14 chapters, many written by authors well known for their contributions in this field. The major topics include seizures induced by photic stimulation, praxis and thinking, music, reading, hot-water immersion, touch or movement, eating, and emotion.

The reader seeking a review article on each of these varieties of reflex epilepsies will probably be disappointed. The first chapter, by Binnie, presents an interesting discussion on how specific activities can selectively activate localized regions of brain in the idiopathic generalized epilepsies, as exemplified by photosensitive seizures. As a clinician, I did not find the chapters on photosensitivity in different species or the prevention of photosensitive seizures with optical filters to be particularly stimulating. Inoue and Zifkin provide a thoughtful chapter on theoretical concepts and potential mechanisms of so-called "praxis" and "thinking" induced seizures. Wieser's chapter on musicogenic seizures and Satishchandra et al's chapter on hot-water epilepsy summarize what there is to say about these entities but provide relatively little new information that has not been previously published. Mayer and Wolf review perioral reflex myoclonias in juvenile myoclonic epilepsy and reading epilepsy; this chapter might have been better suited to a journal article rather than a book chapter. Similarly, the chapters on functional imaging in reading epilepsy, eating seizures in a family, and seizures induced by touch and movement might have been more appropriately published in journals as small series case reports. I do not know whether the section on reflex seizures in infancy would be useful to the pediatric epileptologist or not.

This is decidedly not a book for the general adult or pediatric neurologist. Clinicians and neurophysiologists with a major interest in epilepsy will be pleased to know that this book exists and will find it occasionally useful if they can obtain it from a library. The "value added" for the price (nearly one Canadian dollar per page) does not warrant its purchase for an individual's book collection. Much of the information in this book can be found quickly with an electronic literature search that will disclose the pertinent original publications of these authors.

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NEUROPATHOLOGY OF FOCAL EPILEPSIES: AN ATLAS, 2003. Edited by R. Lahl, R. Villagran, W. Teixeira. Published by John Libbey Eurotext. 332 pages. C\$236 approx.

Neuropathology has a central role in clinical and research activities in the neurosciences in general and in epilepsy in particular. A crossroads for clinical disciplines involved in the care of patients with epilepsy, its changing face reflects the dynamic milieu of research and clinical activities feeding from and into it.

Collections of graphic and textual material on specific topics are the material of atlases, whose worth may be judged by their comprehensiveness, accessibility and ease of use, quality of the material, and ability to convey information to the intended readership. Lahl et al's atlas is more a well-assembled compendium of neuropathological findings in a large series of patients, than an encyclopaedic collection of neuropathological findings in epilepsy. Clinicians caring for patients with epilepsy are the intended readership and the contents reflect this adequately.

As stated in its subtitle, this 15-chapter, 332-page volume provides macroscopic and microscopic descriptions from a collection of 444 epilepsy surgical specimens at the authors' centres. The first five chapters are devoted to introductory material, two large chapters deal with specific conditions in their material, one chapter summarizes their experience in tabular form, two brief text chapters comment on etiology and future perspectives, one section is devoted to postoperative complications, and two large sections contain a collection of 44 nicely-documented case reports.

I enjoyed many things about this volume. The adequately referenced historical and contextual material is a plus. The ability to examine and report adequate surgical specimens, largely due to the performance of en-bloc resections, is unique. There is careful attention to technique and rigour in the assessment of findings. The neuropathological plates are nicely produced and topics are enriched with literature reviews and summaries, as well as non-histological images such as imaging studies. It was refreshing to see a section on postoperative complications, an oft neglected topic in epilepsy surgery.

A few shortcomings should be pointed out. Those expecting a full neuropathological compendium in epilepsy may find this volume limited in scope. The role of some sections on clinical and demographic features of their cases, although interesting in some counts, feels somewhat ectopic in an atlas. In a largely graphic volume, it is unfortunate that individual pages lack a general topic identifier that would allow readers to rapidly orient themselves. Finally, the translation is somewhat unusual, for example, referring to coronal MRI as "coronary," and the plate legends sometimes lack clarity.

Overall this is a carefully assembled, enriched compendium of neuropathological findings in surgical specimens of focal epilepsies that is likely to help the intended readership.

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