

## Book Reviews

ALZHEIMER DISEASE. 1994. Edited by R.D. Terry, R. Katzman and K.L. Bick. Published by Raven Press. 490 pages. \$C181.00.

In the early part of the 20th century, there was intense interest in categorizing the condition of "feble-mindedness". Terms such as presenile dementia, senile dementia and dementia praecox were popular. The latter designation was coined by Emil Kraepelin for the disorder now called schizophrenia. It was Kraepelin also who in 1910, introduced the eponymic term: Alzheimer Disease.

In 1907, Alois Alzheimer provided the documentation of a 51-year-old woman with presenile dementia. He emphasized the presence of neurofibrillary tangles in the neurons of the patient's brain. In the same year, Fischer described "miliary necrosis" now termed neuritic plaques, in the brains of 12 patients with senile dementia. McMenemy stressed that Alzheimer disease should be regarded as a distinct disease – rather than a condition of premature senility of the brain. In 1966, Roth, Blessed and Tomlinson reported that intellectual deterioration correlated highly with the density of "plaques" in the brain of patients with senile dementia; indicating that senile dementia also resulted from disease of the brain and was not merely an inevitable aging process.

Ten years later, Drs. Terry and Katzman and their colleagues pointed to the havoc wrecked by dementia of Alzheimer's type among older subjects. Furthermore, they were convinced that dementia associated with neuritic plaques, neurofibrillary tangles and granulovacuolar degeneration; whether occurring in presenile or senile patients constitute the same disease entity. In the intervening years, medical opinion has supported the contention of Drs. Terry and Katzman.

These authors, together with Dr. Katherine Bick are the editors of the new volume on "Alzheimer Disease". This is a multi-authored book which examines all the major aspects of the disease. Although the focus of the text is on Alzheimer disease; two chapters in the book provide an excellent overview of the non-Alzheimer's dementia.

The first chapter provides a glimpse of the life and career of Alois Alzheimer, describing the medical climate under which the disease that bears his name was recognized and labelled as a distinct entity. Subsequent chapters discuss the clinical phenomenology, epidemiology, pathological characteristics, neuroimaging features, biochemical findings and strategies of management of Alzheimer disease. All the chapters are co-authored by renowned experts who are very active in the clinical and experimental investigations of the disease. The major advances relating to the pathogenesis and molecular genetics of the disease, including the amyloid precursor protein gene and the apolipoprotein E gene are given a systematic and up-to-date review.

This book is an important source of information for neurologists and neuroscientists who are interested in the subject of Alzheimer Disease. Even for the price of \$C181.00; busy general neurologists and other clinicians who provide medical care for the older adult patient, will find the text to be a very valuable reference. Through this book, Drs. Terry, Katzman and Bick have performed a great service to the medical community.

*Abayomi O. Ogunyemi  
St. John's, Newfoundland*

THE BRAIN: A NEUROSCIENCE PRIMER. 2nd Edition. 1993. Edited by Richard F. Thompson. Published by W.H. Freeman and Company Publishers. 475 pages.

This book is an engrossing and well-thought out introduction to the basics of neuroscience. It leans heavily on neurophysiology and neuropharmacology but certainly touches on many other areas. It is much simpler and less comprehensive than say, Kandel, Schwartz and Jessell's *Principles of Neural Science* and therein lies its attractiveness to students. It is written in an exceptionally readable and straightforward style which makes it an actual pleasure to read. It has the advantage of a single-authored text in that it demonstrates a uniformity of style and cohesiveness. The names of the pioneers of neuroscience and summaries of classical experiments are cited frequently throughout the text. Often, developments are presented as an unfolding story which makes for interesting reading. Each chapter ends with a summary of the concepts treated and a list of selected readings which include a number of recent as well as classic references. The chapters are organized in a logical fashion beginning with a brief tour of the brain and neuronal histology and then proceeding to concepts of membrane potentials, synaptic transmission, chemical circuits in the brain, hypothalamus and autonomic nervous system, sensory and motor processes, development and ageing and, finally, higher brain functions. Neurological diseases and pathological states are only given passing treatment. The book is attractively produced with numerous helpful line diagrams and half-tones. Some editing errors were noted.

This is an excellent text for a premedical course in neuroscience or neuropsychology. It is in fact directed mainly toward an undergraduate college audience. It would, however, have some usefulness for neurology residents or medical students who are looking for an excellent readable overview of normal nervous system function.

*Alan Guberman  
Ottawa, Ontario*

A GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING AND LIVING WITH EPILEPSY. 1994. Edited by Orrin Devinsky. Published by F.A. Davis Company. 347 pages. \$C21.00.

In *A Guide to Understanding and Living with Epilepsy*, Dr. Devinsky has helped us better understand epilepsy in a generally straight forward and easy to understand format. We found that with the separate chapters for different subjects, we could move to areas that were the most interesting to us. The tables of content, glossary and definitions are very helpful for quick reference.

We felt fairly well informed about epilepsy prior to reading this book, which made some chapters on the brain and the diagnosis of epilepsy a little tedious to read. However, we found it contained a broad base of useful, up-to-date and commonsense information on all aspects of epilepsy. The book does not frighten you, gets rid of many misconceptions and can be positively used for self help.

We have read other books on epilepsy but found this book covered a wide range of subject matter. Dr. Devinsky clarifies the different types of seizures, medications and their interactions with prescription drugs and each other. He also explains the way it affects a person's day-to-day living and the help that can be found through different programs and treatment centres.

There was excellent information on employment, legal and financial issues, and insurance and benefits for people with epilepsy. However, these sections would have been more beneficial to us had there also been some Canadian information.