

Neuropathology of focal epilepsies: an atlas

R. Lahl, R. Villagran, W. Teixeira
John Libbey & Co Ltd., 2003

Casual perusal of this newly published volume shows it to be more than a simple atlas of neuropathology; in fact it may be appreciated on three different levels.

The first level, presaged in the subtitle, is that it is a distillation of interdisciplinary collaboration between epileptologists, neuroradiologists, psychologists, neurosurgeons and neuropathologists from the Bethel Epilepsy Centre, one of the most pre-eminent in Europe. As such it offers, as emphasised by Professor André Palmini in the prologue, mature reflections on epilepsy by specialists who possess all the relevant data. This part encompasses 33 case reports at the end of the book and also the initial chapters which discuss the characteristics, classification and epidemiology of the epilepsies, and review the history of their surgical treatment. Clinical and epidemiological data are of course vital for planning epileptic surgery, which is concerned with the removal of an epileptic focus that may or may not coincide with alterations visible on MRI. Interest in elective surgery for epilepsy has revived in recent years, and this volume provides a comprehensive overview of the physiopathology of the partial epilepsies that may be successfully treated by surgery with indications for intervention.

And from here we pass on to the second level of the book: scientific data on epilepsies. Much attention is paid to temporal lobe epilepsy and hippocampal sclerosis, and the most recent findings on neurotransmitter alterations are discussed together with data from modern imaging techniques and cellular electrophysiology studies. Similar care and attention are devoted to malformations of cortical development, an area in rapid development due to progress in diagnostic imaging, but one complicated by

problems of classification; once again the treatment is fully up to date. The section on tumours is less satisfactory since it is not supplemented by information on molecular genetics and pathogenetic aspects; however, these data are currently available in other books specifically focused on neoplasias.

The third and main level is of course the atlas, with its impressive number of full-colour, anatomical and histological photographs, as well as magnetic resonance images. An introductory chapter outlines methods of preparing anatomical specimens for examination.

The macroscopic images are arranged in juxtaposition with the photomicrographs of sections stained or immunostained to illustrate the diagnosis. Although some are not of the highest quality, most reach a high standard indeed. Similarly, the magnetic resonance images are not always of the highest quality, but both these and the photomicrographs are often from patients studied years previously.

The overall impression is that book can be rapidly and effectively consulted for authoritative and comprehensive information on epileptic surgery and the neuropathology of epilepsy. Chapter XI on postoperative complications was particularly impressive, with its presentation backed up by useful tables and telling images.

To conclude, this volume, with over 750 references, a wealth of well-chosen images, and numerous tables summarising key data, will prove to be an excellent companion for those concerned with the neuropathology of lesions revealed by elective surgery for drug resistant epilepsy. The book's peculiarity, that it can be consulted and read on several different levels, together with the illuminating series of case histories renders it a must for clinicians.

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