HANDBOOK OF CLINICAL NEUROLOGY. SYSTEMIC DISEASES PART II.
Edited by C. G. Goetz and M. J. Aminoff.

HANDBOOK OF CLINICAL NEUROLOGY. SYSTEMIC DISEASES PART III.
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The Handbook of Clinical Neurology has been part of the mythology of clinical neurology for trainees for many years. A huge series, both in physical size and in coverage, it attempts to provide a comprehensive overview of the subject within more than 70 tomes. Now its reincarnation in series 26 has had to accommodate the enormous advances made in neurology over the last decade, including reclassification of diseases, evidence-based medicine, diagnostic techniques, as well as the ever increasing contribution of neurogenetics. In Volumes 70 and 71, the editors C. G. Goetz and M. J. Aminoff in Systemic Diseases Part II and III, have covered with some style the interface of general medicine with clinical neurology. They have called on an impressive list of international contributors to the not-inconsiderable task and attempted to present their reviews with some homogeneity of format, which is creditable given the diversity of the subjects covered. One of the considerable difficulties in creating books such as these must be to rein in the enthusiasm of some of the authors reviewing their chosen subjects and allow appropriate representation according to clinical importance. In general this has been achieved with considerable skill, which makes its frequent use enjoyable and relevant. However, in attempting to assess the coverage of these books one of the frustrating issues was the lack of
any sort of guide to the contents of the rest of the *Handbook*. This may seem trivial, but if the target population of the *Handbook* is to break free from the constraints of the library and satisfy the clinical demands of individual physicians in certain subjects (as it will remain unusual for individuals to own a complete set), it will be useful to have a system of looking up related topics within the same series.

As some measure of the time it takes such volumes to be completed and published, it is sad to see in the opening pages the toll time has taken on some of the most notable figures in world neurology. The premature deaths of two of the authors, Harold Klowans and David Marsden, on the editorial board are recorded during its preparation within the foreword. At around £150 a volume, the whole series, or even those volumes relating only to systemic diseases, represents a considerable financial investment and must by necessity be aimed not at the individual but at library reference. However, I was impressed by how useful and applicable these books were in general day-to-day clinical neurology, and they have become well-thumbed over the few months that I have had them. These mighty tomes now seem a less frightening prospect for everyday use than they were as a trainee, or perhaps it is simply that over time more of what is written has become familiar.

The format of the two volumes is similar in addressing the neurological complications of disease affecting well-defined organ systems and clearly originating from the pedigree established by the *Handbook of Clinical Neurology* with the characteristic leather-look brown binding. Chapters detail the primary neurological manifestations of neurological illness including clinical presentation, pathophysiological basis, evaluation and treatment, and then follows by acknowledging the broad range of treatement-related neurological conditions. Referencing is provided at the end of each chapter in a uniform, succinct and relevant fashion that invites further reading without dominating the books.

Volume 70 covers the skeletal, endocrine and reproductive, gastrointestinal and hepatobiliary systems, as well as providing an overview of metabolic and nutritional disorders in 471 pages with the contributions of 35 authors. The standard of illustrations is somewhat variable, but beautifully delivered in the chapters on ‘Peripheral Nervous System Complications of Diabetes Mellitus or Hypoglycaemia’ and ‘Neurological Manifestations of Vitamin B12 Deficiency’. However, others are rather dated and it would have improved the visual aesthetics of the book to have updated some information clearly generated some years earlier.

Volume 71 encompasses the broad range of neuroimmunological disease over 732 pages and includes sections on collagen vascular diseases and vasculitis, immune system disorders and multi-organ disease. In addition, a final section is dedicated to various aspects of oncology in particular direct effects of tumours, the paraneoplastic syndromes and leptomeningeal metastases. Of the two volumes this was the best constructed, with authoritative clinical reviews covering the major topics of neuroinflammatory immune-mediated disease in considerable detail. Contributions on the neurology of HIV infection and neurosarcoïdosis were particularly informative and well-illustrated, with clear management algorithms.

These two volumes continue the tradition of the *Handbook* by providing two definitive reference textbooks on neurological complications of systemic disease. I was impressed by the concise, effective and practical way in which subjects were addressed and the information delivered. I think it is fair to say that most clinicians would still see the *Handbook* as a reference set that is almost entirely accessed via the local medical library. Reading these books has changed my mind about this. These volumes are of particular interest to the many general neurologists who provide help and advice about neurological conditions to their general physician colleagues, either at the district general hospital level or within larger centres. I am sorry not to have had the entire three volumes on systemic diseases to review but I will consider the financial investment in my missing Volume I to be well worthwhile.

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