Tumors of the Pediatric Central Nervous System


This recently published book provides a generally good overview of the field of paediatric neuro-oncology. It is beautifully illustrated and for quick reference all chapters display the most relevant information in well placed, orderly numbered boxes. The four sections (Current Diagnosis and Therapeutic Approaches; Intracranial Tumours; Spinal Cord Tumours; Outcomes and Complications) cover all aspects of the care of children with central nervous system (CNS) tumours. About one third of the first section is covered by the chapter on surgical neuropathology. Considerably smaller is the chapter on the anaesthetic considerations of CNS tumours and which does not cover all of the aspects of anaesthesia in these patients. As with the chapter on anaesthesia, the other chapters in this section provide adequate information for paediatric oncologists and neurosurgeons to enable them to confer initial information on these aspects to the patient and parents. But they do not provide all of the necessary information required by, for example, anaesthetists, intensivists and radiotherapists.

In the second part of the book, intracranial tumors are discussed in separate, readable chapters. Not all of the information on ongoing clinical trials is exactly up to date, which is understandable. However, more information about these trials is provided in the last section.

Treatment proposals based solely on these chapters might not cover all the possible beneficial treatment modalities. However, since care for paediatric neuro-oncology patients is in general provided by multidisciplinary teams, the danger of not considering all of the treatment modalities is small.

The third part of the book, which discusses spinal cord tumours, is more or less an extension of the second part. A chapter in this section also covers peripheral nerve tumours, strictly speaking not tumours of the CNS. In the last section, the chapter on Cooperative Group Trials gives the reader a nice overview of current treatment regimens provided by the different groups. Explanations of the different types of study (phase I, II and III) appears a bit superfluous for the target readership of this book. A major negative point of the book is the rather short chapter on the late effects in long-term survivors. Of all childhood cancer survivors, those that are recovering from brain tumours generally suffer the most from treatment sequelae. This chapter does not give any clear guidelines for the follow-up of CNS-tumour survivors. A general scheme for short- and long-term follow-up would have been very welcome.

Nevertheless, this book provides the reader with readily accessible up-to-date information in the complex field of CNS tumours. It will therefore be especially useful to young medical staff members in paediatric oncology and neurosurgery departments; as such, it is almost a must for training hospitals. However, all those interested in the treatment of children with CNS tumours are also likely to find it useful and certainly worth the money.

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DOI: 10.1093/annonc/mdf087