BOOK REVIEWS

The Pseudotumor Cerebri Syndrome. Pseudotumor Cerebri, Idiopathic Intracranial Hypertension, Benign Intracranial Hypertension and Related Conditions

By Ian Johnston, Brain Owler, and John Pickard
New York: Cambridge University Press
Copyright © 2007, p. 365
Price: $160.00

This is a comprehensive review textbook on pseudotumor cerebri syndrome (PTCS) written by three clinicians, Ian Johnston, Brain Owler, and John Pickard, all with extensive experience of this syndrome. This is an informative monograph that addresses both theoretical deliberations and practical clinical aspects.

The book is well organized, beginning with a brief introductory chapter and then going on to a detailed description of the development of the “pseudotumor cerebri” concept and a review of several related controversial issues, including mechanism, nosology, and nomenclature. After these three chapters, the authors draw a provisional conclusion that an abnormality of cerebrospinal fluid dynamics due to impairment of cerebrospinal fluid absorption with increase of intracranial fluid seems to be the most likely underlying pathophysiological mechanism. Using three extensive personal patient series and a comprehensive review of clinical literature on the subject, they then discuss in detail the etiology, clinical features and investigations, treatment, and outcome (chapters 5–9). The etiology is a complex topic, and the authors concisely divide the quantified factors into two groups, depending on pathophysiological mechanisms. When dealing with clinical features, particular attention is drawn to two distinct examples: cases who have headache but without papilledema and asymptomatic cases who are found to have papilledema on routine examination. Clinical features of PTCS in pediatric ages are also reviewed. The last section of this text, chapter 10, deals with experimental studies and emphasizes possibilities for establishing a suitable experimental model of PTCS to facilitate further investigation. A potential shortcoming is the absence of differential diagnosis of headache, vision disturbances, or intracranial hypertension in the clinical section.

Overall, the authors provide up-to-date summary of PTCS. This is a well-written book that covers both clinical and research issues. It is appropriately priced. Not only neurosurgeons, but also neurologists, ophthalmologists, headache specialists, and pediatricians will find this text useful.

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Practical CSF Cytology (CD-ROM)

By Harald Von Kluge, Stefan Isenmann, Hans J. Kuehn, Martin M. Kluska, Valentin Wieczorek, and Otto W. Witte
New York: Thieme Publishers [CD-ROM]
2008. $49.95 USD

This interactive CD-ROM is intended for neurologists, neuropathologists, cytopathologists, and other laboratory practitioners. There is a single-screen introduction text with a list of cell types and descriptions, and a brief (18 figures with short explanatory legends) example section, but the majority of the images are found in the exercises, a 140-question interactive self-examination with options for question selection, real-time statistical display, and the ability to reset the evaluation.

Although the spectrum of images is fairly comprehensive, the terminology is somewhat outdated and not particularly clinically relevant. The necessity of immunophenotyping is discussed, but immunophenotyping images and results are not presented in the exercises. No clear clinical information or context is provided with the exercise images, and there is an implication in some of the questions and answers that a specific diagnosis can be made on the basis of two or three cells in a single high-power field (without corresponding clinical and laboratory information)—a dangerous presumption, to say the least.

The technical, software, and memory requirements for running the CD-ROM are standard, and the various sections are intuitive and easy to navigate. There is a “click and hold” capacity to enlarge an image and maneuver within the enlargement. Unfortunately, many of the images are quite grainy, and some are not of good production quality.

In summary, this CD-ROM may be a useful primer for students and researchers wishing to become familiar with cerebrospinal fluid cytology; however, I would not recommend it as a study guide or reference book for more advanced clinical practitioners.

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