Book reviews

Cerebrovascular Disease, Cognitive Impairment and Dementia. 2nd Edition
This is an important clinical and research area. In recent years a considerable amount has been written on this topic as the relationship between vascular disease and dementia, and particularly Alzheimer’s disease, has been clarified. From my perspective as an old age psychiatrist, this increase in information has at times been somewhat confusing and this book pulls together all the relevant clinical and research evidence into a single volume.

This is a fairly substantial hardback with 26 chapters. It is very well structured and has sections on Classification and Diagnosis, Epidemiology and Risk Factors, Pathophysiology, Clinical Features, Assessment and Investigations and Management. Individual chapters are well structured and referenced with clear tables and figures. The book has minimal overlap between sections and a consistent style. Individual chapters/sections can be read in isolation and I have found it useful for reference purposes both for research and clinical activities. I found the sections on Assessment and Investigations and Primary Prevention extremely helpful. Perhaps a chapter focusing on the relationship between physicians for older people and psychiatrists would have emphasised the need for more joint working.

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Handbook of Pain Relief in Older Adults, an Evidence-Based Approach
Edited by F. Michael Gloth
The requirement for specific texts on this subject might be debated; the importance and comparatively neglected status of the topic is indisputable. The case is couched in evangelistic terms by the editor of this 257-page volume (who also contributes six of the 13 chapters, a preface and an introduction): ‘This book is only one of many sparks that must be lit to ignite a blazing effort to eliminate the omnipresent shadow of pain throughout the world’.

The book’s chapters cover the following topics: basic concepts and terminology of pain and pain control, and epidemiological aspects (the wholly inadequate delivery of pain management relative to its prevalence amongst older people, with some of the reasons) (chapter 1); pain assessment (including the merits and limitations of pain scales) (chapter 2); opioid (chapter 6) and non-opioid (chapter 7) drug treatment; and other specific ‘anaesthetics’ interventions (such as neural blockade and destruction, electrical stimulation, vertebroplasty, botulinum toxin) (chapter 8). There are chapters on broader issues, some familiar to practising geriatricians. These include: multidimensional assessment and multidisciplinary care planning (‘preventive analgesia’) (chapter 3); rehabilitation in pain management (chapter 5); and pain control in long-term care (chapter 9). A chapter is also devoted to spirituality as an adjunct to pain management (chapter 4).

A strong slant towards a US health professional and ‘expert patient’ readership emerges in topics less familiar or applicable to non-USA clinicians. These comprise: the politics of pain (legislative and public policy issues) (chapter 10); the internet and electronic patient records to assist with pain relief (chapter 11); and pain relief tips for patients (chapter 12). Against this background, the editor concludes with suggestions for change (chapter 13). There is a brief appendix, essentially a proposed analgesics formulary for older patients.

Despite the book’s subtitle (but in keeping with its principal title), the style is in the main didactic, rather than academic. The chapters on drug therapy provide a fuller, critical and thoughtful analysis of evidence. An introductory section on general pharmacological aspects of ageing utilises rather unorthodox sources, however, and incorporates some misconceptions. Examples include the attachment of undue significance to age-associated alterations in protein binding and the attribution of increased accumulation to increases in the apparent volume of distribution of lipid-soluble agents. The first-line use of cyclo-oxygenase-2 selective inhibitors in the management of moderate to severe chronic pain is endorsed in line with many US guidelines. This understandably pre-dates the rapid emergence of evidence on cardiovascular risks, though the discussion on concomitant low-dose aspirin (where indicated) to some extent anticipates this. The ‘formulary’ appendix is perhaps more categorical in some of the recommendations than is wholly supportable from hard data. The difficulties affecting clinical research must, however, be remembered. This is also true of the ‘anaesthetics-focused’ interventions. The chapter on rehabilitation interprets the term narrowly to cover ‘physical therapy’ or ‘physical medicine’.

Geriatricians wishing to become better informed about pain control interventions and the work of colleagues in the field will find material and lessons of value. Many sections
are, however, highly focused within the USA. For this reason, and perhaps some aspects of style and approach, the added value of this volume over other available sources is questionable to mandate its presence (at $99.50) in every departmental library. There is the bonus of an included CD-rom and the option to complete an included CME test. If you perform sufficiently well, and for a $10 fee, you can qualify in the USA for 6.5 AMA/PRA category 1 CME credits.

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**Vascular Dementia. Cerebrovascular Mechanisms and Clinical Management**

R. H. Paul, R. Cohen, B. R. Ott and S. Salloway  

The rapidly ageing population faces a range of pathologies affecting its health. Vascular incidents are among the most frequently reported, leading to impaired cognitive and psychological function and affecting the quality of life of both sufferers and their carers. This book is a welcome addition to the literature, fulfilling all the criteria of a good read: informative, up-to-date and, most importantly, useful in clinical and research practice.

The contributors to this book are world experts who have provided an in-depth overview of current clinical and research topics in vascular dementia, covering epidemiology, basic cellular mechanisms, genetic causes and neuroimaging, as well as profiles of cognitive deficit and neuropsychiatric changes and their impact on functional activities of sufferers. I found the extensive information about correlation of neuropathological and imaging substrates to clinical phenotypes particularly useful. The only slightly disappointing part of the book is the brief section devoted to clinical management. Nevertheless, the book is enjoyable and an informative reference tool, which I have already consulted on a number of occasions.

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