emergence of newer imaging techniques and in particular the role of functional imaging such as FDG PET in the work-up of patients with metastatic or paraneoplastic disease, where the primary cannot be found by traditional diagnostic approaches.

The subsequent chapter focuses on the subject of primary CNS tumours and will probably be of most interest to the histopathologist. There is an informative discussion about the paucity of evidence for all the proposed treatment strategies in the management of glioma.

The next chapter on primary spinal cord malignancy is excellent with an emphasis on the clinical and epidemiological aspects as well as the influence of treatment on outcome.

The next four chapters focus on optic nerve, brainstem/cerebellar/ventricular, pineal and pituitary region tumours. There is an extremely informative discussion on controversies surrounding the management of optic nerve glioma. The role of surgery, hormonal manipulation and radiotherapy in patients with pituitary tumours is effectively summarised and presented in a highly readable format.

There follows readable chapters on genetics, epidemiological issues (including the risks or otherwise of mobile phones!), meningiomas and tumours affecting the skull base. No matter how many times I am told about the difference between Vernet’s, Villaret’s or Collet–Sicard syndromes it goes in one side of my brainstem and out of the other so this passage has been photocopied and framed!

An arch-consumerist and therapeutic kamikaze has written the chapter on the management of intracranial metastases. It is claimed that 10–15% of systemic cancer patients develop intracranial metastases. It is my feeling that most neurologists and neurosurgeons would baulk at the author’s idea of ventilating patients with multiple intracranial metastases to reduce ICP, let alone embark on seemingly endless surgical intervention to remove cerebral metastases as they appear. There are also a number of factual errors, including advocacy of anticonvulsant drug level monitoring to assess therapeutic response in patients with epilepsy (surely it is more sensible to give a bigger dose until side-effects supervene).

The next three chapters deal with the issues of spinal, leukaemic/lymphomatous and leptomeningeal metastases. The authors quite rightly emphasise the importance of contrast enhanced MRI and repeated CSF examinations in the diagnostic work-up of these patients. I would like to know how much is ‘a large volume of CSF’ and the whereabouts of the nerve that causes a ‘facial neuropathy (V)’!

The chapter on peripheral neuropathy is unfortunately particularly poor. Only a pedant would point out that the author has confused hyperpathia with allodynia but acroparaesthesia is not synonymous with ‘tingling numbness’, whereas, stocking-glove is synonymous with ‘distal appendicular’. Finally, who could seriously suggest that ‘motor signs and symptoms are prominent in patients with relatively pure sensory neuropathy’?

CANCER IN THE NERVOUS SYSTEM, 2ND EDITION
Edited by Victor A. Levin

This is a multi-author textbook with the main contributions from US-based oncologists and neurologists. As a consequence the text has a consumerist philosophy, which European and UK readers might find slightly unpalatable. A typical example of this is found in the discussion on the surgical management of patients with multiple intracranial metastases, where the chapter author states that the question of neurosurgical accessibility is determined by ‘the risk and extent of neurological injury the patient is willing to accept’. This approach significantly undervalues the judgement of the experienced clinician and is at variance with some Hippocratic tenets exalting the doctor to ‘do no harm’. However, the main issue is whether this textbook will be of value to the practicing neurologist and this question will be the main focus of the current review.

The first two chapters deal with the fundamental principles and practical applicability of diagnostic imaging and nuclear medicine techniques. I found these chapters slightly turgid but there were many pertinent reference points. There is a useful discussion on the side effects of radiation, the
The next chapter on plexopathies is much more useful and the discussion on differentiating carcinomatous from post-radiotherapy plexopathy is very instructive. The importance of pain, dysaesthesiae, lymphoedema and myokymia is rightly emphasised.

The chapter on paraneoplastic syndromes is also very readable and informative but I’m not sure that most neurologists would agree with the notion that autonomic neuropathies and PSP are paraneoplastic syndromes.

The chapter on seizures and syncope in cancer patients is obviously written by an author whose radiological and neurophysiological colleagues have too much time on their hands. Is EEG necessary to ‘localise the lesion’ where imaging is so much more sensitive? Do patients with syncope need an MRI of the brain? Is phenobarbital the anticonvulsant of choice in children with epilepsy? I suspect the answer to most, if not all of these questions, is no.

The following chapters on stroke, rehabilitation, cancer pain, neuroendocrine function and mental status/cognition are very interesting and it is also refreshing to have a chapter dedicated to psychiatric and psycho-social issues.

So, has Professor Levin succeeded in his ambition to provide a book that ‘alleviates some of the anxiety that physicians have when seeking the best course of management for their patients with cancer of the central nervous system’? I suspect that after reading this book, most UK neurologists will have their anxiety levels potentially increased on realising the inequalities between investigational facilities available for insured patients in the US compared with the NHS. However, more is not necessarily better and I can’t help speculating that clinical assessment of heart rate and rhythm is likely to be far more cost-effective than a brain MRI in cancer patients with syncope.

The book is well illustrated but at £95 is probably most suited to the reference section on the departmental bookshelf. If Professor Levin does get round to producing a third edition perhaps he should consider the needs of readers in ‘Third World Countries’ with a bit more forethought and he definitely should show the red card to a few of his contributors.

Adrian Wills
Department of Neurology,
Queens Medical Centre,
Nottingham, UK
DOI: 10.1093/brain/awg083