Book & New Media Reviews

The Pain System in Normal and Pathological States: A Primer for Clinicians. Progress in Pain Research and Management, vol 31

Luis Villanueva, Anthony H. Dickenson, Hélène Ollat (Eds). IASP Press, 2004. 347 pages. \$71.00 (US) retail price, \$57.00 (US) IASP member price. ISBN 0-931092-53-1

This book is primarily devoted to providing a comprehensive view of pain mechanisms to both medical teachers and clinicians. It aims to promote bridges between basic scientists and clinicians. The book is divided into five parts:

1) Nociceptive Inputs to the Dorsal Horn. 2) Dorsal Horn Plasticity following Injury. 3) Anatomical and Functional Organization of Ascending Pain Pathways. 4) Endogenous Modulatory Systems: Their Role in Analgesia and Pain. 5) Novel Therapeutic Strategies: Preclinical and Clinical Approaches. There are three to five chapters in each part for a total of 19 chapters. There are a total of 42 contributing authors, primarily from the U.K., France, Germany and Denmark. There are 11 American authors. Therefore the book has a large European influence.

This is a very well written book, and consistent in quality from chapter to chapter. There is very good use of figures and illustrations. All chapters are thoroughly and appropriately referenced. The authors have done an admirable job of attempting to summarize into just 20 pages, what for many has been a career's work. However, due to the complexity and incomplete state of knowledge of many of the topics, often several alternate theories are presented, leaving the "novice" reader confused. The clinician will find it a very difficult read with the exception of the last chapter written by H.J. McQuay, from the Pain Relief Unit, University of Oxford, U.K. This chapter is entitled: Pain Matters: A Clinical Viewpoint. I found this chapter a joy to read, the author able to share his great philosophical insights with clarity and ease.

The clinician hoping to find the latest new clinical approach with pharmacological therapy for difficult pain patients will not find much help here. Also, the average clinician will likely not have the patience to work through the heavy reading. More integration of

the information presented would be helpful. However, the clinician with a keen interest in the basic science of pain mechanisms may find it a useful reference book to come to a greater understanding of the complex pathophysiological mechanisms that are involved with acute and chronic pain.

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