

a comprehensive and elegant review of the field in mid 1996 – unfortunately chapters on genetics always tend to be outdated when they appear. The question therefore arises whether future textbooks should be on CDROM or on the web and updated even more often. There are also issues that never get old, the chapter on “Education of the diabetic patient” by Day and Assal represents pleasant and useful reading for every practising diabetologist and diabetes educator. It would have been advantageous to have also incorporated the chapter on computer-assisted diabetes education.

It is an innovative approach to address certain topics (diet, organisation, economics) from an international standpoint, although it would be easier for the reader to digest and compare the content, if the chapters were written in the same style, addressing the same questions. In terms of epidemiology this approach becomes a little bit too international. It would have been better to cover diabetes in different countries and ethnic groups in one chapter to allow interesting comparisons. Some chapters are redundant, why not cover C peptide, proinsulin and assays for insulin and its precursors in one chapter? Is it really necessary to split the chapters on diabetic eye disease into four?

In terms of screening and prevention of diabetes the message is less clear. The chapter on screening clearly states (Dowse et al.), “widespread recommendations of screening procedures and interventions not proven to be efficacious should no longer be tolerated”. Prevention of Type II (non-insulin-dependent) diabetes mellitus is advocated, however, both as a population and high-risk strategy (Tuomilehto et al.), although screening is probably the prerequisite for prevention.

My wish list for the third edition includes; 1) better quality figures, 2) more colour reproductions, particularly of morphological figures and 3) a summary or conclusions for each chapter highlighting clinically important issues. The chapter on “Insulin action in vivo” by Ferrannini et al. provides an excellent example with their “Points of clinical interest”.

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Clinical Management of Diabetic Neuropathy. Contemporary Endocrinology, 7. A. Veves (ed). Humana Press, Totowa, New Jersey 1998, pp 337, ISBN 0-89603-528-4, \$ 125.

In his preface the editor states that this book is written for the broad spectrum of nonspecialist physicians who encounter problems related to diabetic neuropathy in their daily practice. Hence, the intention is to concentrate on clinical aspects and practical management.

A thorough reading of the book convinces the reader that this intention has come to reality. The book covers the spec-

Footnote: EFA, essential fatty acids; EPO, evening primrose oil; HPAL, Hamburg pain adjective list; SOD, super oxide dismutase; TSS, total symptom score; VSOAC, volume sensitive organic anion channels.

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trum of nerve dysfunction in diabetes mellitus, including basic features such as epidemiology, aetiology, and structural changes, but emphasis is given to its many-faceted clinical presentation and management. This latter point is especially well served with detailed information on how to manage different complicated aspects of diabetic neuropathy. A chapter on painful neuropathy has many sound clinical recommendations, ready to use. The four last chapters of the book are about the problem of the diabetic foot, a section that must be highly valuable to any physician treating diabetic patients. The value of the book is further enhanced by a rich bibliography ending each chapter. On the whole, the content of the book meets strong demands.

As expected in a multi-author book (its 20 chapters are written by 30 authors), the quality of the material varies from chapter to chapter. A review chapter on autonomic neuropathy is admirably written whereas a succeeding chapter on autonomic neuropathy and heart disease is more or less redundant. A few authors suffer from AOS (Abbreviation Overuse Syndrome), a disabling disorder of many modern medical writers. Even if the abbreviations are explained when introduced, the text cannot be used as a reference work when the reader has to make a time-consuming search to find the meaning of abbreviations needed to understand a certain part of the text. If the editor allows the use of many abbreviations, a list of abbreviations should be introduced with the index of the book. Can each nonspecialist reader be expected to comfortably decipher EFA, EPO, HPAL, SOD, TSS, and VSOAC? EGF (Explanations given in footnote)!

Inevitably there is some overlapping between related chapters. Since repetition is the mother of learning this is not a great disadvantage. But there is no need for introductions to several chapters about the epidemiological aspects of diabetes when there is a special chapter on epidemiology. It is also disturbing when different chapters describe clearly differing classifications of diabetic neuropathy. There are indeed different opinions on classification, but the editor had better discuss this problem in a special section rather than just present different opinions without commentary.

Some chapters lose their logical path and digress from the main topic. The chapter on clinical management of diabetic neuropathy is for example useful for the clinician and provides much practical advice. But it gets confusing when many differential diagnoses are listed, including some very rare disorders and some that have little to do with diabetic neuropathy. There are rarely reasons to consider diseases such as acute intermittent porphyria, the Riley-Day syndrome, primary myopathies and myasthenia gravis when a diabetic patient has neuropathy. Such list is more bewildering than useful for the practising nonspecialist. Remember that common disorders are more common than rare disorders and unusual presentations of common disorders are more common than typical presentations of rare disorders (this latter wisdom borrowed from the preface of another valuable textbook).

The above critical comments are however of minor importance. In general this book is a worthwhile source of information for many readers.

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