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Ageing and Dementia

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Foreword

Ageing and Dementia are closely related conditions as we know from the increasing frequency of dementing disorders in later life. However, significant cognitive impairment is not necessarily a consequence of advancing age. Considering the increasing life expectancy of our population it is one of the great challenges of medicine to identify those factors which obviate successful ageing and to search for possibilities of intervention.

Epidemiologic studies including extensive neurodiagnostic, biochemical, and genetic assessment are the tools to delineate the differences between normal and pathologic age-associated changes. Progressively refined techniques of analysing postmortem brain tissue enhance our understanding of the various dementing disorders. Finally, all these informations and the results of experimental work may lead to new treatment strategies.

In spite of considerable progress in molecular genetics, biochemistry, and neuropathology, the etiology and pathogenesis of Alzheimer's disease and other dementing disorders are still unknown. Diagnosis is frequently made only at postmortem. Because specific disease markers are not available for the majority of dementias, consensus criteria for the identification of such disorders are warranted. These criteria could serve at a basis for early diagnosis and distinction from other dementing disorders.

The present volume includes the papers and posters presented at the 5th International Symposium of the Research Initiative EBEWE, held in October 17-19, 1997 in Graz. This international workshop was intended to provide an overview of the current classification, clinical features, pathomorphology, neuroimaging, and molecular biology of this important group of central nervous system disorders. The conference's aims were to ensure correct diagnosis and to give insight into the pathogenesis of these neurodegenerative diseases becoming increasingly important in neurobiology, clinical neuropsychiatry, neuroimaging, neuropsychology, social medicine, and pharmacology and, thus, to provide a basis for future treatment strategies. It is hoped that these data will promote research in the diagnosis, understanding, and treatment of pathologic ageing and dementing disorders.

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