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Neurology is considered a difficult topic, not only by medical students but also many clinicians. The multitude of syndromes resulting from pathology affecting various combinations of the central and peripheral nervous systems are often difficult to comprehend. The presenting symptoms are often vague and non-specific, while careful and thorough examination is usually required to elicit the relevant physical signs in order to arrive at the correct clinical diagnosis. Advances in neuroimaging have aided the diagnosis of neurological problems considerably but do not obviate the need for good clinical skills in patient management.

Neurology in Practice has released its fourth edition 14 years after being first published in 1994. The book was initially intended as an aid for medical students, to improve their understanding of the principles of neurology and, more importantly, to enhance their assessment and management skills. It has been very well received by a wider readership, thus subsequent editions have been modified to cater for the interests of both trainees in internal medicine and specialist clinicians. Nonetheless, the authors have kept facilitating good neurology practice as their guiding principle in their choice of the content and layout of the book. In fact, the size of the book has been modified from that of the full textbook of the first edition to the pocket size of the current edition, thereby allowing clinicians to carry it and use it as a quick reference to aid their clinical practice.

The book is organised into chapters on commonly encountered presentation patterns. Each chapter starts with a succinct summary of the principal features and diagnostic approach towards important neurological syndromes. This is followed by a practical overview of the more commonly encountered specific diagnoses, with an emphasis on investigations and management. The contents are organised into short sections with liberal use of note forms, tables, flowcharts and diagrams, where applicable, to facilitate easy reference. To contain the size of the book, in-depth discussion of individual topics had to be excluded. This might make some sections difficult for those who do not have some basic knowledge of neurology to grasp. On the other hand, it would have been possible to enlarge some of the neuroimaging and retinal pathology illustrations

without affecting the book's 'pocket size', something that would enable readers to better appreciate the significant features.

The latest edition of the book has been updated with new information, including new chapters on neurodiagnostic tests and the neurological manifestations of systemic disorders and neurotoxicities. Both are relevant for clinicians specialising in other fields who may, from time to time, encounter neurological symptoms in patients with other primary diagnoses or may encounter neurodiagnostic tests and be unsure about their application and interpretation.

Future editions of this book would be enhanced by attention to certain aspects. The importance of organised multidisciplinary care in the management of acute stroke could be emphasised. Instructions on use of assessment scales such as the NIH Stroke Scale (NIHSS) in acute stroke and the Modified Rankin Scale as a means of following rehabilitation outcomes could be included. The need for functional assessments of patients with neurological conditions could be emphasised in the opening chapter; it is important that clinicians be aware of the handicaps that their patients face whether or not in rehabilitation settings. The chapter on medicolegal issues could be consolidated by including ethical issues in neurology practice such as assessment of mental competence for decision-making in patients with impaired consciousness or cognition, end-of-life decisions for patients with severe disabling or terminal neurological conditions, and the application of predictive tests for neurogenetic diseases to asymptomatic family members.

This book contains a wealth of information on neurology and can be useful as a quick reference to aid clinical practice for trainees and specialists alike. For an in-depth understanding of specific topics, they will need to turn to some of the reference textbooks listed.

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