

Among the most outstanding chapters in the third section are those covering surgical approaches for the anterior and mid-third ventricular lesions. The authors review structural presentations of the diverse pathological spectrum of diseases affecting the ventricle, as well as the advantages and risks of available operative corridors, in an effort to develop guidelines for strategies in the management of these lesions. Another excellent chapter addresses the more difficult occipital transtentorial approach for tumours in the region of the pineal gland. Each chapter in the section stresses the importance of organising the team of experts and medical personnel who are dedicated to the treatment of complex ventricular lesions.

The fourth section presents special techniques and methods. It is an important section because it embraces the most recent advanced techniques in stereotaxy, computer-assisted surgery, endoscopy, and endovascular therapies for the treatment of third ventricular lesions. The last two chapters enrich the section by adding critical reviews of the roles of radiosurgery and chemotherapy as primary or adjuvant treatment for some specific lesions.

The final section, entitled 'special problems' exhaustively reviews the less common lesions that affect the third ventricle region. The surgical treatments for aneurysms, cavernomas, and arteriovenous malformations are not to be missed. Detailed and expansive chapters

that deal with all aspects of the colloid cyst and cranio-pharyngioma are added to this new edition. New perspectives on the clinical management of pineal region masses have been developed to assist with the multi-factorial logical treatment of these complex lesions. In addition, pineal physiology and the topic of germ-cell tumours in the paediatric age group have been afforded in great detail. As with all the chapters in this book, case examples are in their abundance with well-illustrated radiological figures.

In summary, this single authoritative volume brings together the latest perspectives on anatomy, pathology, imaging, and surgery of all disorders in and around the third ventricle. In *Surgery of the Third Ventricle*, which is complementary to the author's 1993 publication *Brain Surgery Complication Avoidance and Management*, Dr Apuzzo has managed to relate information that should be of use to both neurosurgical trainees and senior staff; as such, this book belongs in every hospital library.

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Antiviral therapy

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The development of antiviral drugs has rapidly evolved from utter scepticism in the 1970s to the celebrated success of acyclovir for the treatment of herpes simplex virus infection in the 1980s and the ever-increasing importance of treatment for human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection in the 1990s. While great progress has been made in the development of antibiotics in the treatment of bacterial infection, there is only a limited number of antiviral drugs that can be used clinically. The intrinsic property of viruses as obligate intracellular parasites has been a major stumbling block in developing antiviral drugs because chemicals that inhibit viral replication also inhibit cellular functions, which leads to drug toxicity. New achievements in biotechnology, however, have allowed rapid diagnosis of viral diseases and revealed insights into the complex mechanisms of viral

pathogenesis—these achievements have contributed greatly to the rapid development of antiviral drugs. The field of antiviral research has finally come of age with new technologies for drug design, progressive approaches to drug combinations, and advances in drug delivery methods. The expanding list of emerging or re-emerging viral infections that require treatment has invoked significant attention to the development of effective antiviral treatments over the years. In addition, resistance to antiviral drugs is becoming a serious problem, especially in the treatment of chronic diseases such as HIV and hepatitis B.

Antiviral Therapy, written by a team of experts from both industry and academia, is aimed at presenting to the readers "the history of development of antivirals and their current status." In fact, the authors have achieved more

than they had aimed for. Treatable human viral diseases and treatment regimens that are being investigated have been outlined in the various chapters. The treatment strategy for each disease is different and is tightly associated with viral pathogenesis and replication cycle, and a brief and concise description of such has been included for each disease. Antiviral drugs (including those not clinically used) and the mechanisms of their antiviral activities are described in detail. The chapter on chemotherapy treatment of HIV infection outlines the most updated novel approaches in drug development and treatment regimens. The final chapter, which I found most stimulating, includes a selection of new antivirals and their novel targets—one day, these new drugs will be important in clinical usage. The importance of resistance to antiviral drugs is also raised many times in relation to different diseases.

The book is an excellent reference for medical students, clinical practitioners, and those who want to understand more about antiviral treatments. For those who are in the field of antiviral drug development or who would like to enter the field, this book is a good starting point from which to examine the recent developments in strategies and mechanisms of different drugs. One example, which is relevant to Hong Kong, is the potential use of new neuro-

minidase inhibitors for the control of an outbreak of the H5N1 influenza A virus, for which no vaccine is available yet. Such an option may become a necessity if the avian influenza virus is able to establish itself in humans and thereby spread to other regions in the world.

Each chapter is easy to understand and the illustrations are effective in conveying complex messages. The summaries containing background information are also helpful. This book would be of use in understanding alternatives and limitations associated with antiviral treatment. There is a lack of references to published work in some of the chapters, where detailed information may be needed for individuals to understand a finer point. There is also no reference to dosing regimens for licensed antiviral drugs for each particular viral disease. This is certainly not a drawback, however, if the reader is looking for clinical guidelines for using antiviral drugs because such information is readily available in other publications.

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Clinical communication skills

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Doctor Fielding challenges us when he critiques the apprenticeship model of learning communication skills in medical practice: “The complaints expressed about current [communication] skills [of health workers] leave little room for doubt that current role models have flaws. Instructors are either not teaching the correct skills in a way that students are able to learn, or they are not teaching the correct skills because they themselves don’t possess them.” As a child, when faced with sick relatives and feeling lost about what to say, I often thought, “Since I don’t know how to talk to the sick, I won’t be able to become a nurse or a social worker. I shall strive to become a doctor so that I can do something for them.” However, not long after I became a doctor I realised that doctors must talk to patients too, and that my medical school had not equipped me enough in how to communicate with patients. I had to take counselling courses to remedy the deficiency.

Many medical schools have now begun to recognise the need for communication skills training. In departments of family medicine and psychiatry, videotaped consultations and role plays of patient-doctor interactions are being used in training. Assessing how doctors communicate with patients in diagnosis, physical examination, and management has become an integral part of undergraduate and postgraduate family medicine examinations. A limited curriculum time, a lack of emphasis in the further development of communication skills, and (shall I dare agree with Dr Fielding?) the paucity of quality role models in the field have meant that communication has not received its proper attention in the daily practice of doctors in general.

Doctor Fielding’s book is a handy textbook and manual for both students and teachers in the health care profession. It was judged the 1996 medical book of the year by the British Medical Association. Each chapter