BOOK REVIEW

Practical Neurology, 4th Edition

Edited by José Biller

Lippincott, Williams & Wilkins, 2012, ISBN-13: 978-1-4511-4263-1, 747 pages, list price \$99.99

Practical Neurology, 4th edition, is designed to provide a rapid but comprehensive update on the growing knowledge of neurological diagnosis and therapeutics. It aims to close the divide between evidence-based medicine and the multiplicity of clinical dilemmas where evidence is weak or absent. It is published by Lippincott, Williams & Wilkins and is an update from the third edition, published in 2009. The first edition was published in 1997.

This 6 × 9-inch, 747-page paperback weighs 2.6 pounds. Although its dimensions allow it to fit snugly into a large coat pocket, its heavy weight may limit its mobility, making it better suited as a reference book kept in an office or library.

The textbook is divided into two parts. The first 35 chapters focus on the fundamentals of diagnosis. The last 23 chapters focus on treatment and the approach to neurological emergencies. The text is written mostly in an outline format, which facilitates quick localisation and retrieval of information. The chapters in the first part of the text focus on a particular sign or symptom. Of relevance to neuro-ophthalmology are sections on visual loss, abnormal pupils, diplopia, facial numbness, facial pain, facial weakness, dizziness, and headache. These chapters are written by prominent neuro-ophthalmologists. Although there is some variation in format, most chapters are presented in approximately six sections, including aetiology, clinical manifestations, evaluation, differential diagnosis, and diagnostic approach. In some instances, a review of relevant anatomy is included and this helps to orient the reader to the relevant structures. Many chapters include helpful charts, tables, diagrams, or images that serve as visual tools to aid in learning. Each chapter concludes with a section on the indications for making referrals to subspecialists (neurologists and others).

The second part of the text focuses on treatment of particular neurological conditions ranging from multiple sclerosis to disorders of the neuromuscular

junction. Each of these sections gives a brief introduction to the condition, followed by a succinct review of the therapeutic options including dosing, titration, and management of side effects. There is excellent discussion of the evidence and therapeutic consensus. Where available, reference is made to clinic trial data that support the treatment regimens discussed. Several chapters include treatment algorithms that are particularly helpful when many treatment options exist, for example, in headache and other pain syndromes. Common neuro-ophthalmic diseases (for example optic neuritis and idiopathic intracranial hypertension) are not individually addressed in this section, although they are discussed in less detail with the relevant symptom or sign in the diagnostic section of the book.

The text comes with a self-folding pocket brain anatomy study guide. It is perfect for the trainee or general practitioner who is reviewing neuroanatomy fundamentals. A neuro-ophthalmologist would likely prefer more detail. There is some variability in format of each chapter with the majority in outline form and the minority in prose. Although each style offers its own advantages, the lack of consistency does impede utility as a quick reference.

This text is a concise and current reference for many neurological diseases and symptoms that includes excellent coverage of neuro-ophthalmic symptoms. The neuro-ophthalmologist looking for more specific information on neuro-ophthalmic disease management may be better served with a text focused on neuro-ophthalmology.

Peter W. MacIntosh, MD
Heather E. Moss, MD, PhD
Division of Neuro-Ophthalmology
Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences
University of Illinois
Chicago, Illinois, USA

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