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Rezensionen – Analyses – Reviews

André Carayon et al.: Les névrites lépreuses. Masson, Paris 1985. 240 pages, 180 F

L'institut de léprologie appliquée à Dakar, fondation de l'Ordre de Malte, avec la collaboration de plusieurs organisations européennes et américaines a conçu et rendu possible la publication de cet ouvrage. Il est le fruit d'un travail de plus de 30 ans, mené par les médecins de cet institut et leurs collaborateurs. Son sujet, les névrites lépreuses, est un chapitre de la léprologie souvent négligé et dont l'importance pratique est quelquefois méconnue. Après une brève note sur l'activité de l'Ordre de Malte, l'auteur senior (A. C.) donne une introduction dans la thématique de ce livre. Neurochirurgien original, qualifié par ses confrères Anglo-Saxons de «medically minded surgeon», il est devenu neurologue, tropicaliste et finalement professeur de léprologie à Dakar. L'introduction reflète le vaste spectre de ses connaissances sur la lèpre. Ecrite très personnellement, elle donne une vue d'ensemble des problèmes actuels de la léprologie, soient-ils pathologiques, biologiques ou simplement ceux de terminologie. L'étude générale s'étend sur plusieurs chapitres. Les recherches sur les névrites ont débuté en 1952 et ont été poursuivies parallèlement à l'évolution des connaissances sur la pathogénie de la lèpre en plusieurs séries. La dernière série se rapporte à 380 malades. Dans les chapitres théoriques on trouve un aperçu sur les conditions de l'invasion des nerfs par *M. leprae*, sur le rôle de l'immunologie, sur des facteurs déclenchants, sur la pathophysiologie du nerf lésé, sur le rôle de la température, des traumatismes, de la hémodynamique, de l'inflammation. Dans les chapitres cliniques on trouve d'abord un résumé des troubles neurologiques chez les patients examinés, puis les importantes indications thérapeutiques dans les différentes formes. Les névrites ENL et les névrites reverses réagissent d'une manière différente aux traitements purement médicaux ou combinés avec décompression chirurgicale.

Dans la deuxième partie du livre les problèmes spécifiques du traitement chirurgical des différentes localisations des névrites sont décrits et illustrés par des photos et par des schémas. Le dernier chapitre traite de l'évolution actuelle de la chirurgie palliative des paralysies irrémédiables. Une bibliographie de presque 500 numéros conclut ce livre qui marque une véritable pierre milliaire en léprologie.

R. SCHUPPLI, Bâle

E. H. O. Parry (Editor): Principles of Medicine in Africa. 2nd edition. Oxford University Press, Oxford, U.K. 1984. 1119 p. ISBN 0-19-261337-5

This book aspires to be a basic textbook for students and a guide for practitioners. It covers a very large spectrum of medicine in general, and in Africa particularly.

In several chapters much space is given to the physiology and pathophysiology of organ systems and their diseases. I think that the majority of practitioners do not expect this amount of recapitulation of basic disease mechanism, which is not specific to medicine in Africa. Although I regard this emphasis of pathophysiology a justified effort to stress the importance of a rational basis in medicine, I consider it nevertheless somewhat too broad.

An excellent aspect of the text is the systematic presentation of problems particular to Africa in almost every chapter. These very interesting and useful comments stress particularly the epidemiology, but also the management of diseases, taking into account the often very limited diagnostic and therapeutic possibilities and resources in third world countries.

The first three chapters: "climate and disease", "people and disease" (especially!), "food, agriculture and disease", are an introduction to the background of medicine in Africa, worthwhile reading for every doctor going to practice in this continent (with the already mentioned restriction that, e.g., the diagram on triglyceride metabolism in the latter hardly offers additional essential information).

Compared to the previous edition, more details are given about the treatment and management of diseases. However, some rather recent developments of drug treatment are given too little attention. Praziquantel is mentioned in an enumeration of drugs against schistosomiasis, but its well proven potential is not even discussed in the text. The new WHO recommendations on the treatment of leprosy are not mentioned. One also looks in vain for a comment on mefloquine, which is a serious omission although its role in malaria control in Africa remains to be determined yet.

It might be a consequence of the time-consuming edition of such a comprehensive, 44-author textbook that papers published later than 1980 are rarely referred to. How otherwise could one explain why AIDS is briefly mentioned in the chapter dealing with cancer, in relation to Kaposi's sarcoma, but not at all in the sections dealing with infectious diseases and the immune response to infections.

Despite these criticisms, I consider this textbook as very useful for doctors working in Africa, provided that they are not necessarily looking for the latest research results, but for basic information on medicine in Africa.

The text is generally easy to read, there is a very complete index, and the drawings, tables and pictures are of a good quality.

K. MARKWALDER, Zurich

Ascariasis and its public health significance. Edited by D. W. T. Crompton, M. C. Nesheim, and Z. S. Pawlowski. Taylor and Francis, London/Philadelphia, 1985. 289 p. £ 25.00.

This is a timely, excellent and stimulating reading. Ascariasis is a forgotten problem of forgotten people, as Davis mentions in the introduction citing Schultz's now famous sentence of the early 1980's. Indeed, ascariasis is rare in residents of industrialized coun-

tries of today. A good example is Japan. According to the Ministry of Health and Welfare the annual prevalence of *Ascaris lumbricoides* in Japan was on average 61% in 1927, and it has dropped to 0.05% in 1982. This contrasts with the significance of ascariasis in third world countries. It is estimated that 1000 million people harbour the parasite, and Walsh and Warren in 1979 estimated the global mortality from ascariasis to 20,000 per year (i.e. 1 per 1000 persons infected). There is an urgent need for more applied and basic research on this parasite.

The book has four parts. Four authors contribute to part I on the biology of *Ascaris* sp. The life history and spatial distribution of the parasite are dealt with extensively, as well as the immune response and intestinal pathology in the host. An unresolved problem remains the taxonomy of *A. lumbricoides* and *A. suum*, whether they represent one or two species. This question is not academic. Much biological evidence has come from studies on *A. suum* in pigs, and it is not clear whether it can be extrapolated to *A. lumbricoides* or not. Ultrastructure and biochemical properties are only briefly mentioned in this section. Six authors contribute to part II on epidemiology. It begins with a description of mathematical models, for which I am not an expert, but I found it fascinating to see how mathematical formulas could simulate age prevalences and reinfection curves, and predict that if 40% of a population were treated with an anthelmintic drug of 95% efficacy over 5 years, the greatest benefit would result from bi-monthly treatment intervals and the lowest benefit from one-yearly intervals. This section is followed by interesting country studies from Malaysia, Burma, Kenya and Peru. Cultural and dietary habits are considered responsible for different prevalences of ascariasis among Indians, Chinese and Malays in Malaysia. The work from Burma describes a nice age prevalence curve; the peak prevalence occurs between 5 to 9 years, then tapers off to reach 40–70% at age 65 years and older.

In part III six authors report on ascariasis as a disease. Many of the children of tropical countries who are infected with *A. lumbricoides* suffer from other intestinal and tissue parasitic infections and from protein-energy malnutrition at the same time. There is evidence from studies in Tanzania, Kenya and India that *A. lumbricoides* alone is capable of reducing growth of children. After periodic deworming there is about 25% more weight gain over placebo-treated controls. There is, however, amazingly little information on the role of *A. lumbricoides* in producing diarrhea, anorexia, respiratory tract infection and asthma, and there is little mentioning of its association with other parasites. Surgical complications, which are by no means negligible, are concisely described, 80% are intestinal (bowel obstruction, volvulus and others), 12% are biliary and 7% hepatic (abscesses). In part IV the various aspects of prevention and control (coordinated projects, sanitation, chemotherapy, primary health care) are described by six authors. I would have liked a short chapter on health education.

This is a carefully prepared and well produced book. I recommend it to clinicians, epidemiologists, biologists and all who are concerned with health of people in slums and rural areas of the tropics.

DIETER STÜRCHLER

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