

## Book Reviews

*The Ciba Collection of Medical Illustrations*. Volume 1, *Nervous System*, F. H. Netter, A. Brass and R. V. Dingle (Eds.). Part 1, *Anatomy and Physiology*, 1983 (pp 237; £39). Part 2, *Neurologic and Neuromuscular Disorders*, 1986 (pp 256; £41). Ciba Pharmaceutical Company, New Jersey.

There are two large and impressive atlases which incorporate some of the prolific illustrations of Frank Netter. The small Ciba neuroscience manuals are already popular and well-known to many students as enjoyable to study, easy to read and informative. The first volume of the series called *Nervous System* was published 35 years ago and produced in a number of languages. This is now outdated so that the current collection represents material that has been completely revised, expanded and matured. These volumes consist of text written in collaboration with one or more experts in the relevant area of neuroscience, accompanied by an illustration on virtually every page. Everywhere the text and illustrations match neatly together, thus reflecting the cooperation between Netter and the experts. The text is concise and factual, and the neuroanatomical detail and clarity are unparalleled. The combination of verbal and visual allows this information to be understood and rapidly assimilated. Of course this is not unique, but the breadth of coverage, the profusion and quality of the illustrations surely is. The artistic quality of Netter's paintings is consistently appreciated in the neuro-anatomical illustrations of Part 1. The precision of the work and quality of reproduction are excellent. Colour is added appropriately to demonstrate anatomical divisions; the sphenoid bone is coloured yellow in many paintings of the skull. The labelling of figures is clear and thorough, for example the various cortical sulci, the relationship of thalamic nuclei, or position of descending tracts in the internal capsule are easily seen.

Neurologic and Neuromuscular disorders covered in Part 2, include many illustrations of a clinical kind. As an example the Headache section includes paintings that illustrate a patient vomiting, claspng her head, and arguing with her husband. In contrast to anatomical drawings many such pictures convey small quantities of information and some students might feel they reflect a superficial educational content of the material. But the human expressions and mannerisms are no less valuable as visual aids to learning. Most are in some way memorable; either humorous, like the snoring narcoleptic, or just factual, as with the handicaps of motor neurone disease. Conversely it is slightly irritating and distracting to find a diagram of the head in trigeminal neuralgia covered in minute branches of the trigeminal nerve; a point that reflects the obsessional qualities of Netter's work. Elsewhere in Part 2 diagrams and tables are also generously, but appropriately, used. The clinical text is mostly excellent and disease classification is

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up to date. I liked the succinct coverage, on one page, of the differential diagnosis of coma, accompanied by illustrations on a second page. CT scanning, angiography, biopsy, surgical and embolisation techniques are generously illustrated. Neurological management sometimes reflects American practice, but this is not an important drawback.

These books are ideal for students of medicine and nursing, and for those in allied professions. Graduates will also enjoy them. They cover most of the subjects required for medical students, but without particular emphasis on more common disorders. They provide a pleasant but serious and informative read, requiring minimal effort. The quality of the atlases is excellent so I was a little surprised by the cost which represents fair value. Because of their size these books are for the study or library, and they must be highly recommended to medical and nursing libraries.

*W. R. G. Gibb*



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