

BOOK REVIEW

Merritt's Neurology

12th Edition. 2010

Edited by LP Rowland, TA Pedley

Lippincott Williams and Wilkins. Philadelphia

The field of Neurology is ever expanding and the body of knowledge that a medical student, resident and practising neurologist will need to know is exhaustive. It is certainly impossible for any single volume to be comprehensive in all fields. Nevertheless it is often useful to have a textbook where key information can be provided concisely and in an orderly and easily to access format.

The venerable tome, *Merritt's Neurology*, initially published in 1955 and authored then solely by H Houston Merritt, has now reached its 12th edition and has transformed over the years from a single author textbook to a multi-authored format, its essence ably maintained under Dr Lewis Rowland's editorship and in this edition by both Drs Rowland and Pedley. The key feature that has made it an attractive book for trainees and consultants alike was its beginning with Section 1: Symptoms of neurological disorders, and by Section 2: Diagnostic tests, before embarking on chapters of specific diseases. This helps provide a broad rather than compartmentalised view of the discipline. However, in keeping with advances over the recent years, new chapters have been added including endovascular neurology, advances in psychiatry, movement disorders, dementia and molecular genetics. Despite the many additions and revisions, it has remained surprisingly concise and readable. Of note, its many Tables provide quick and useful summary of key information. Another feature is the access to online contents on its website for purchasers of the book.

The question remains, in this age of journals, both print and electronic and the importance having the up to date knowledge at our fingertips, whether a textbook of Clinical Neurology, however impressive its pedigree, will remain relevant and viable. Textbooks, by their nature, will not have the latest information by the time they are printed. However, they provide something else – a comprehensive overview of the discipline based on years of clinical experience of its authors and editors. This, I must say, *Merritt's Neurology* has achieved admirably.

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