

Books Received

AMYOTROPHIC LATERAL SCLEROSIS. A SYNTHESIS OF RESEARCH AND CLINICAL PRACTICE. 1998. By Andrew Eisen and Charles Krieger. Published by Cambridge University Press. 303 pages. \$C97.44 approx.

AN ATLAS OF MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS. 1998. Edited by Charles M. Poser. Published by Parthenon Publishing. 129 pages. \$C101.40 approx.

CELL DEATH AND DISEASES OF THE NERVOUS SYSTEM. 1999. Edited by Vasselis E. Koliatsos, Rajiv R. Ratan. Published by Humana Press. 683 pages. \$C188.50 approx.

CELL NEUROBIOLOGY TECHNIQUES. 1998. Edited by Alan A. Boulton, Glen B. Baker, Alan N. Bateson. Published by Humana Press. 320 pages. \$C129.35 approx.

IN VITRO NEUROCHEMICAL TECHNIQUES. 1998. Edited by Alan A. Boulton, Glen B. Baker, Alan N. Bateson. Published by Humana Press. 416 pages. \$C129.35 approx.

NEURODEGENERATION METHODS AND PROTOCOLS. 1998. Edited by Jean Harry, Hugh A. Tilson. Published by Humana Press. 328 pages. \$C120.83 approx.

PHARMACOLOGY OF CEREBRAL ISCHEMIA. 1996. Edited by Josef Kriegelstein. Published by Medpharm GmbH Scientific Publishers. 719 pages.

THE CLINICAL NEUROPSYCHIATRY OF STROKE. 1998. By Robert G. Robinson. Published by Cambridge University Press. 491 pages. \$C123.50 approx.

THE GENESIS OF NEUROSCIENCE. 1998. By A. Earl Walker. Published by The American Association of Neurological Surgeons. 371 pages.

VASCULATURE OF THE BRAIN AND CRANIAL BASE. VARIATIONS IN CLINICAL ANATOMY. 1998. By Walter Grand, L.N. Hopkins. Published by Thieme. 248 pages. \$C201.15 approx.

Book Reviews

A COMPENDIUM OF NEUROPSYCHOLOGICAL TESTS. 2ND EDITION. 1998. By Otfried Spreen and Esther Strauss. Published by Oxford University Press Canada. 736 pages. \$C92.95.

In its first edition, this Compendium quickly established itself as one of the most respected reference standards for the normative interpretation of tests used in neuropsychological clinical practice. The current revision continues in this tradition with the inclusion of not only more recent tests, batteries and their more recent releases, but also includes comment on computerized batteries and interpretive print-outs.

This edition has added over 300 pages permitting the expansion of the function/domain specific chapters to include separate treatment of executive functions, occupational interests and aptitude, and, a very important topic – malingering and symptom validity.

As the authors state in the preface, this is not intended to be an encyclopaedic listing of all available tests with commentary. Rather, the authors have focused on a selection of those tests most commonly used clinically and for which there are fairly respectable norms. Issues of validity, reliability and the normative base for each test are addressed with a fair but critical eye. Claims with regard to sensitivity, specificity and the ecological validity of tests and measures, such as impairment indices, are also objectively assessed in view of research findings. In brief, this is a scientifically-based approach to psychometrics in the context of neuropsychological assessment, setting well-argued standards against which all of the testing instruments are measured.

The introductory chapters dealing with clinical issues such as history taking/interviewing; test selection, administration and discussions with the client; and also report writing and the clinician's responsibilities towards the client are thoughtful, ethical and germane. Both the neophyte as well as the experienced clinician would do well to review these statements of principles to ensure the maintenance of high standards of clinical practice.

Although not intended to be a comprehensive handbook, mention is made of the importance of systematic investigation of the client's premorbid ability profile and history, as well as behaviour during the clinical interview and testing. This cannot be emphasized too much, especially with the trend towards computerized testing and interpretation facilitated by the proliferation of personal computers and software packages. There is simply no substitute for the direct involvement of a skilled neuropsychologist in integrating all of the available sources of information in order to arrive at a justified and valid clinical formulation of a case. Those battery-based clinicians who argue for the 'blind' interpretation of test scores, which this reviewer has referred to as a "psychological CAT scan" or "painting by numbers", will find little endorsement in this volume. The majority of neuropsychologists now favour an evolving, hypothesis driven eclectic approach to assessment, with attention paid to the referral question, the presenting complaints and the need to cross-validate findings with convergent testing, as advocated by Spreen and Strauss.

At the normative/interpretative practical level, the tables and psychometric norms and formulae are clearly laid out with clear, concise guidelines for their use. Whenever norms are cited, mention is made of sample size, demographics and generalizability to other populations. Although those data are always available (or should be) in the test manuals, it is important for the astute clinician to be reminded of the limitations of interpretations. Particular care has been given in the use and interpretation of the determination of premorbid intellectual status. It is clear that current cognitive profiles can only be meaningfully understood in relation to a holistic picture of the client's premorbid state. The most common methods used for these estimates include reading tests, and regressions based on demographic and socio-economic variables are thoroughly dealt along with due consideration of the limitations of such approaches.