

If you would like to review books for ACNR, please contact Andrew Larner, Book Review Editor, c/o rachael@acnr.com

Multiple Sclerosis Care: a practical manual

Zajicek, Freeman and Porter are to be congratulated for producing a useful pocket guide to MS. Describing itself as 'a practical manual', this single volume covers a very wide range of information, from drug names and doses for neuropathic pain to a diagram of the variety of adhesion molecules at the T-cell surface.

This is not a multi-author book with three editors but a volume written by three co-authors, comprising a doctor, a therapist and a nurse. It seeks to cover the breadth of information useful for MS care. The style is consistent and very readable, without the repetition, or worse occasional contradictions or variations of emphasis, which can bedevil multi-authored books. The comprehensive content has a logical order, moving from pathology and diagnosis, to disease modifying therapies, relapses and rehabilitation. It covers symptomatic treatment, equipment and services.

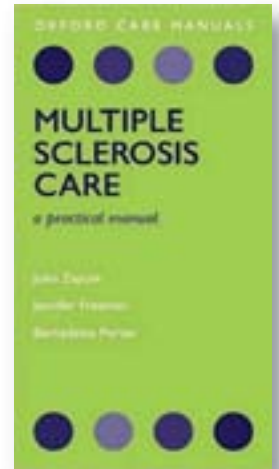
There is generally good use of supporting tables, and a number of web citations. The index is helpful but perhaps serves doctors better than other disciplines. For example, if you're aware T-cells are being researched in MS and look up T-cells under T you find nothing, but looking up immunolog (ical synapse) gets you to a brief introduction to cellular immunity and self-antigens.

The authors are to be commended on some very useful sections. The description of disease modifying therapies is comprehensive, strongly evidence-based and appropriately critical. The section on scales is a nice resource for readers who need to quickly check what's in a scale, how it's administered and scored, and where they can find a reference or even download a manual. There are many sections which

would be useful for doctors who are not experienced in MS and its diagnosis and management, notably chapters on differential diagnosis, investigations, and what to say when patients ask for low dose naltrexone or advice on paying for stem cell 'treatment'. Indeed, the book would be a useful reference for many non-medically qualified readers, notably nurse specialist, therapists, and commissioners of MS services.

The authors all practise in the UK and potential buyers may wonder if there would be too much focus on British practice. Rest assured there is much here that translates to other countries. The book is strongly evidence-based; nowadays treatment trials and science are multinational. While the examples of service design happen to be British, they are described in ways which are generalisable, such as who to include in a multidisciplinary relapse clinic. The internet has made us a global village and the British and American patient organisations are web-based sources of information.

What might be improved in future editions? The diagrams and figures could be better presented. Reproducing MR scans without high production costs may be difficult but these images would be better if consistently cropped, if extraneous labelling was removed and if abnormalities were always arrowed. The illustrations for oligoclonal bands and VERs could be better. The diagram for the blood brain barrier could be clearer. The utility of the index for the non-specialist could be increased. But these are minor points. If you are looking for a single compact volume on MS care, this book would be a good choice that you could read as a refresher, or use as reference guide.



Authors/editors: John Zajicek, Jennifer Freeman, Bernadette Porter
Published by: Oxford University Press
ISBN-13: 978-0-19-856983-1
Price: £19.95

Reviewed by:
 CA Young,
 Professor of Neurology,
 WCNN, Liverpool.

Insights: Facts and Stories behind Trigeminal Neuralgia

Whether the practise of medicine is predominantly an Art or a Science provokes much heated discussion, especially amongst doctors. Those who dislike a predominantly factually based, dispassionate, 'evidence-based' method of dealing with patients have found support by recent publicity on 'narrative medicine'. Champions of this argue that doctors should spend more time listening to accounts of the patients' symptoms and how it impacts on their lives. This is meant to help to form a 'therapeutic alliance' between patient and doctor.

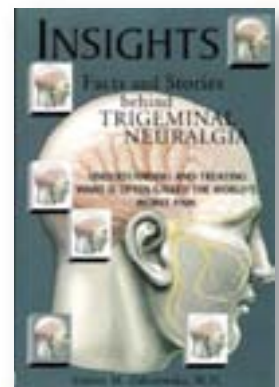
Detractors of this method of teaching and practising medicine however have argued that the pendulum has swung too far. They are worried that too much emphasis on empathy and communication skills distracts from the acquisition of core medical knowledge. These new doctors may be good at hand holding and offering their shoulders to cry on. In addition, they will need to communicate well, especially when they have to tell patients that they are ignorant of the diagnosis! It is always difficult to judge why and what the patient narrates in a consultation. Patients' methods and motives for talking about their symptoms probably vary according to which doctor they see. The late Richard Asher in his entertaining essay 'Talk, Tact and Treatment' (*Richard Asher Talking Sense. Pitman Medical. London 1972*) has analysed some of these motives.

Of course, medicine is both an art and a science and this book is an attempt to bridge this divide. The stated aim of this book is to inform patients with trigeminal neuralgia (TN) and is written by one of the undisputed experts of this condition. It is also a useful read for neurologists, neurosurgeons and maxillofacial surgeons who see these patients regularly. The book layout is patient-focused and the vignettes

contributed by patients are intermixed with the hard facts behind the science of TN. The information is well presented, starting with the basic anatomy and physiology of the trigeminal nerve. This is then followed by the presenting symptoms of TN, investigations, then medical and surgical management. One chapter is focused specifically on decision making to help patients choose the best therapy for them at a given time. In my opinion, this is the crucial chapter for both patients and doctors to read. It is notoriously difficult to compare probabilities. For example, the data on Table five on page 244 would indicate that you are more than two hundred times more likely to die from playing football than from New Variant CJD! However, I suspect that this is an oversimplification and information derived from self selecting populations tends to skew the data.

There are some minor omissions and errors. For example, it would be useful to highlight the fact that long term use of carbamazepine for TN does pose a risk of causing osteoporosis in the population most prone to this condition (post-menopausal females). A book like this takes time to produce and it is not surprising that recent studies suggesting that TN may be alleviated using triptans were not mentioned. Contrary to what is mentioned in the book, checking trigeminal reflexes is part of the neurological examination and does not need to be done by a neurophysiologist.

Overall, I found this book to be very readable and informative. It is an excellent summary of TN, and considering the price, well worth buying for trainees and established clinicians who deal with patients with facial pain. Make sure you have the facts at your finger tips; your patients will be sure to have it after they read this book.



Author: Joanna Zakrzewska
Published by: TNA Trigeminal Neuralgia Association
ISBN: 0-9672393-4-6
Price: \$27.95

Reviewed by:
 MS Chong,
 Kings College Hospital,
 London.