Handbook of Neurological Rehabilitation, Richard J. Greenwood, Michael P. Barnes, Thomas M. McMillan & Christopher D. Ward, eds, pp. 740, 2003. Price £120.00, ISBN 0-863777-57-0. Taylor & Francis, London.

The second edition of this handbook of neurological rehabilitation covers many aspects of the clinical management of persons with neurological disorders, which is a main cause of long-term, complex disablement. The volume is divided into 3 main sections, each with several chapters written by experts mainly from the UK.

The first section concerns principles of practice in chapters related to clinical aspects and to the biology of recovery. Rehabilitation concepts, needs and organization, the interface between neurology and rehabilitation medicine and ethics are discussed in terms that are familiar and probably non-controversial to most professionals active in developed health care systems. Measurement of disability and handicap is discussed concisely in a single separate chapter. The neural prerequisites for recovery of function, neural tissue transplantation and principles of learning are overviewed in informative chapters.

The second, longest, section covers assessment and treatment of the wide variety of functional deficits, which are faced in the clinical setting in separate chapters on mobility, other physical disability, cognitive function and on personality and behaviour. This section is well structured, comprehensive and contains much useful data for clinical practice.

The last section contains brief surveys of the many different nerve system disorders that might cause long lasting and complex disablement. The ambition to review all relevant major disorders and to give all these chapters a "rehabilitation" profile is at the cost of details. There is by definition some overlap between these chapters and the data on functional deficits covered in the previous section and the reader is helped by many references between these 2 sections. One chapter on head injury rehabilitation gives a brief but substantial review of that complex area. An excellent survey of the current evidence base for organization of stroke rehabilitation and specific intervention in this area is provided in another chapter. Hopefully, the further development will allow similar data reviews also in other areas where evidence is still not available. The chapter on spinal cord injury is brief and only about half as long as that on the management of brachial plexus injuries.

There are some other priorities that might also be questioned, but generally the balance within and between the topics of the three main sections of this volume is relevant. Figure illustrations are relatively sparse, probably not exciting to many readers, not always that informative and offer potential for improvement. However, overall editorial standards are excellent. In summary, this volume offers a most valuable update in a field that is complex and rapidly expanding. With its focus, it is an important complement to textbooks in neurology and rehabilitation medicine and is strongly recommended as a textbook for clinical training in this area.

Jörgen Borg
Department of Rehabilitation Medicine
University Hospital
SE-751 85 Uppsala, Sweden
E-mail: jorgen.borg@rehab.uu.se

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Emergencies in Chronic Spinal Cord Injury Patients, 3rd edition, Eltorai IM & Scmitt JK, eds, pp. 302, 2002. Price $39.99. ISBN 0 970887 32 9. Demos Medical Publishing, New York.

This book is the third edition of a volume of articles originally presented at the Veterans Administration Medical Center, Long Beach, USA in 1984, covering most areas of emergencies and problems in patients with chronic spinal cord injury (SCI).

The book still has the character of a collection of separate seminars and lectures. These lectures are of varying levels and standards. The amount of information presented in certain sections is not always relevant to the importance of the subject. It is striking to note that there are 8 pages on how to gain venous access and only 5 pages on spasticity. The enormous problem of pain in SCI is covered in 5 pages and there are only 4 pages on psychiatric emergencies. Furthermore, basic facts are repeated in several of the chapters. To avoid overlapping of information, it might have been beneficial to present some pathophysiological and clinical effects (sensory, motor and autonomic) at the start of the book or as introductions to connected sections. Although the book may be a good reference for many professionals within the field of SCI, the variable level of information in each of the chapters makes it difficult to define the target group. For the fourth edition of the book, which, it is hoped, will follow, more careful editorial supervision is recommended.

Leif Stjernberg
Department of Neurosience, Rehablitation Medicine
University Hospital
SE-751 85 Uppsala, Sweden

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Spinal Cord Medicine, Steven Kirshblum, Denise I. Campagnolo, Joel A. Delisa (eds), pp. 672, 2001. Price $129, ISBN: 0 7817 2869 x. Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.

This book follows the blueprint of the subspecialty examination for board certification in spinal cord injury (SCI) medicine in the USA. It covers a vast area of spinal cord medicine, including multiple sclerosis, post-polio syndrome and other disorders, which are not always included in SCI textbooks. It provides a solid and comprehensive basis for clinicians of various professional backgrounds. Some of the chapters are worth special comments.

The epidemiology of SCI is presented in detail. However, some risk groups are not included, notably patients with ankylosing spondylytis, who have an increased risk for SCI and who are easy to misinterpret diagnostically.

In the chapter on early prediction, a discussion about how and when to inform the patient about their prognosis would have been appropriate. Psychological adaptation to SCI is covered in an excellent way. However, the impact of pain on quality of life in these patients is only dealt with briefly in the chapter on pain. A section concerning the psychological reactions within the professional team and how to train and support the team members in their often stressful task would also have been useful.

In the chapter on acute management of SCI the timing and principles of surgery are adequately dealt with. In this context a discussion about the controversial issue of surgical vs non-surgical treatment would have been expected. Since the life expectancy of people with spinal cord injury is slowly reaching that of intact persons, the organization of and need for long-term follow-up and support for persons with SCI would also be worthy of discussion.

Finally, the chapter on neuromuscular electrical stimulation loses some of its reliability by the declarations of conflict of interest from 4 of the 5 authors.

In summary, the book provides a good and wide survey of up-to-date research and clinical management in the field of SCI. However, the fast progress in this field is emphasized by the 586 references in the chapter on spinal cord regeneration.

Leif Stjernberg
Department of Rehabilitation Medicine
University Hospital
SE-751 85 Uppsala, Sweden

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