Book Review


This is an excellent book which will prove useful for both clinicians and basic scientists of different disciplines. It examines current knowledge on the genesis, natural history and diagnosis of Alzheimer’s disease in the pre-symptomatic and early stages of the disease. It is readable and well edited and the first two Introductory Chapters by the editors themselves, are particularly well written. It could be used either to read cover-to-cover or to pick out salient chapters, e.g., on Functional Imaging, that ‘stand alone’ in their own right as state of the art treatises. The chapters on Genetic Testing, Pathological Diagnosis, Pathophysiology, and Neuropsychological Testing, I found to be particularly succinct and understandable. In a rapidly changing and developing scientific arena, these chapters will still be relevant in several years’ time.

Are there any criticisms or limitations of the book? I am an Old Age Psychiatrist who spends sessional time working in a multidisciplinary Memory Clinic; I therefore read new books from the perspective of a ‘jobbing clinician’. In this light, one or two sections towards the end of the book are a little long-winded. For example, the chapter on putative Peripheral Markers for Alzheimer’s disease is supported by no fewer than 426 references and is over-inclusive. I was disappointed that there was not more emphasis on the ethical aspects of early diagnosis, for example, pre- and post-diagnostic counselling; how ‘bad news’ regarding the diagnosis is conveyed to patients and carers; and the implications of an early diagnosis with respect to capacity to drive. These topics are of particular current interest to ‘jobbing clinicians’ of all disciplines working in Memory Clinics, and are not covered thoroughly either in the chapter on Ethical Aspects, or elsewhere in the book.

However, these are minor quibbles. It is a good book that summates current scientific and clinical knowledge and will prove to be a readable reference book for a broad audience.

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