BOOK REVIEW


Perhaps the best way to review any major text or reference volume in its fifth edition is to compare it to the preceding edition. On this basis, the fifth edition of Greenfield's contains 1,557 pages in toto, whereas the fourth edition published 8 years ago has 1,126; but more is not necessarily better. There are 27 authors listed in the new edition as compared to 24 in the old, and 7 of the current authors are new. The 21 chapters are broken into the same subtopics of neuropathology, and all have the same chapter titles with the exception of the chapter on lysosomal enzyme deficiencies which now is entitled "Lysosomal and Peroxisomal Disorders." The writing styles of the authors vary from crisp and succinct to ponderous, although the goal of each author appears to be to pack as much information into the chapter as possible.

In addition to 12 new pages on peroxisomal disorders, this edition necessarily carries new information on such topics as AIDS, diffuse Lewy body disease, and other central nervous system disease processes that have been the target of more research over the past 8 years. Many chapters are excellent in terms of both the information and the quality of the photographic material. New authorship for the chapter on perinatal brain damage (Lucy B. Rorke) has given it some新鲜，The chapter on bacterial infections (now authored by Helen Reidy and R. F. Fallon) has also gained in readability. On the other hand, there are some chapters that have changed authorship since the last edition to which new information has simply been added to the text with very little culling or distilling of the old information. Examples include the chapter on virus diseases and the chapter on malformations. In these chapters much of the format of the previous text remains, as well as the previous photographs, and references are cited exactly as they are in the previous editions, making one wonder whether the new authors have actually read all of the old references. Ordinarily, it would appear that a major reason for soliciting a new author for a particular chapter would be to provide a fresh approach. With the exceptions already mentioned, Greenfield's fails in this regard but, in fairness, so do many other established medical textbooks, including Textbook of Neuropathology discussed in the next paragraph. The same criticism can be offered for other chapters that have retained the same authors but in which additions are often made to paragraphs without rearranging any of the information. Although this technique may not always compromise the readability of the text, it is responsible for most of the added volume, a hefty 30% increase. The result is an 8.5 lb. book which might be more usable if divided into two volumes. At some point it will have to be decided for each chapter which information is worth retaining and which needs to be eliminated or truncated.

There are other good features of the fifth edition. There is less contrast in the photos which makes them generally easier to view. The references are comprehensive and reflect what appears to be Greenfield's unstated goal throughout the years of presenting a textbook that is as exhaustive as possible. Since another comprehensive neuropathology text (Textbook of Neuropathology, edited by Davis and Robertson) appeared on the scene several years ago and is now in its second edition, comparisons between Greenfield's and the newer textbook are inevitable. Both texts contain a considerable amount of information; however, the chapters in each text vary so much in format and approach to the subjects that any attempt to draw parallels between them is difficult, and perhaps spurious. I think that any neuroscience practitioner, particularly in a teaching institution, should possess both volumes and read them both.

MICHAEL NOEL HART, M.D.