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## The Lancet Handbook of Treatment in Neurology

There can be few book reviewers so dedicated to their art that they do not experience a slight decline in spirits on learning that their Book Review Editor has sent them an offering edited by a recent president of the ABN, whose authors include former colleagues and friends, some of whom still smart from sporting defeats. Here goes. This wee book is great! Firstly, it is small, weighing only 499g and would fit into a 'white coat' pocket or one of those redundant pouches in the freebie conference hold-all that transports the laptop and may just convince any nearby eagle eyed postgraduate education budget manager that you actually went. Secondly, it has a bendy plastic cover, more resilient than paper, more flexible than hard back, and coffee-resistant. It can be cleaned with a wet cloth!

The title represents a gleeful and hopefully final nail in the coffin of the time-expired perception of neurology as a 'diagnose and adios' speciality, a perception that needs burying both to encourage recruitment of future neurologists and to help treat patients with 'incurable' diseases.

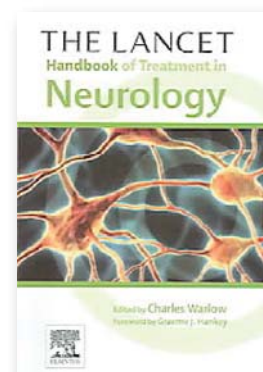
So to the contents. Nineteen chapters penned by renowned authors covering the traditional subjects with some welcome relative newcomers. "Emotional disorders, functional somatic disorders and psychoses" (all in 16 pages); "Neuropathic pain" (14 pages); "Neurogenic pelvic organ dysfunction" (20 pages) and "Anaesthesia for patients with neurological disease" (7 pages) all provide a

useful start point for those unfamiliar with or seeking refreshers in such areas.

The style is clearly laid out with an emphasis on therapeutics, but bullet points on definitions, epidemiology, pathology, and prognosis abound and so they should, since a book comprising pure treatment regimes alone would be pretty indigestible. Treatment is so much more than writing a prescription and non-pharmacological therapy is generously summarised.

The drug treatment schedules themselves are clear and specific and one is left in no doubt when such edicts are based on less than concrete evidence. Adverse effects of recommended treatments and monitoring requirements add considerably to the utility of the text. What this book is not is a source for in-depth exploration of neurology for either the inquisitive youngster or the more seasoned campaigner tasked with postgraduate neurology teaching or lecturing. What it represents is a concentrated source of hard practical therapeutic information spanning the vast breadth of our subject which will be invaluable to those whose job plan still leaves time to see the occasional patient.

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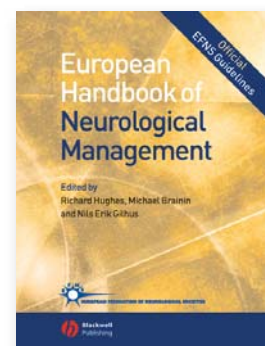
## European Handbook of Neurological Management

Launched at the EFNS Meeting held in Glasgow in September 2006, this volume brings together the deliberations of EFNS Task Forces, 44 in all, appointed to examine particular diagnostic and therapeutic issues in neurology. Some of these 'Official EFNS Guidelines' have been previously published or are available on the EFNS website, others have been the theme of sessions at previous EFNS Meetings (e.g. Alzheimer's disease and dementia in Athens in 2005). Topics covered range from those which fall within the purview of practically all neurologists (e.g. headache, Parkinson's disease) to the frankly *recherché* which few will be called upon to manage (e.g. neurological complications of liver transplantation, fatty acid mitochondrial disorders). Chapters vary in size from less than ten (e.g. cerebral vasculitis) to more than 30 pages (e.g. stroke), but all use a common framework for the classification of evidence (4 classes: I-IV) and the rating of recommendations (3 levels: A-C), as defined in Brainin et al. (Eur J Neurol 2004; 11: 577-81) and also in chapter 3 of this volume, Task Force members reaching consensus by an iterative method. Where evidence was lacking but consensus was clear, 'Good Practice Points' have been stated. Most reports include evidence published up to 2004, some earlier, some later. The title page heading of 'First edition' clearly anticipates the updating of these guidelines over time.

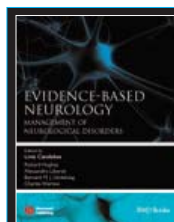
Neurologists may be equivocal in their response to 'guidelines': they may attract or repel, possibly in equal measure, depending on whether uniformity of clinical practice is seen as a highly-desirable blessing or an autonomy-undermining curse. Although I have not systematically examined this, it is my impression that Good Practice Points outnumber A-C recommendations in this book, reflecting the lack of evidence underpinning neurological practice in many areas. This upshot of the work of many of the Task Forces may act as a strong stimulus for further research.

The book is attractive and well-produced (few typographical errors, of which my favourite was the observation, p. 315, that PEG for enteral nutrition in ALS is "wildly available"), but who will buy this book? In an age of subspecialisation, much of the contents may not be immediately relevant to the day-to-day work of individual practitioners, reducing the incentive to purchase, perhaps the more so in light of the provisional nature of many of the guidelines. Trainees may be attracted by the short overviews and definitions of certain syndromes, but this is not a comprehensive textbook of neurology and moreover it does not come cheap. Clearly, however, every departmental library should have a copy for reference.

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**Edited by:** R Hughes, M Brainin, NE Gilhus  
**Published by:** Blackwell Publishing  
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**Price:** £120.00



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