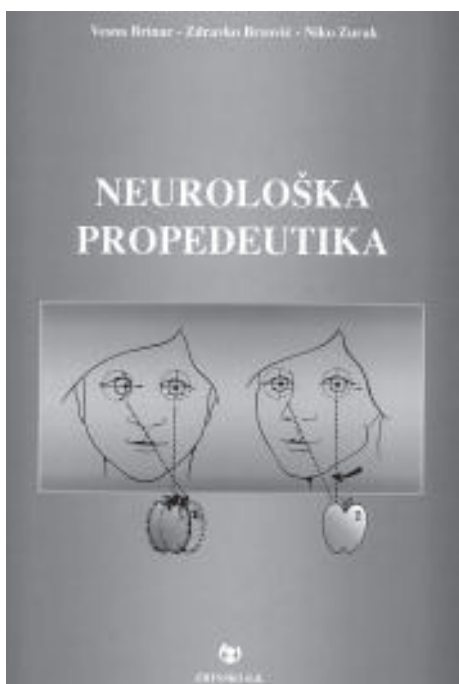


## BOOK REVIEWS



*NEUROLOŠKA PROPEDEUTIKA*, by Vesna Brinar, Zdravko Brzović and Niko Zurak. Zrinski d.d., Čakovec, 1999, 291 pages. ISBN 953-155-045-X

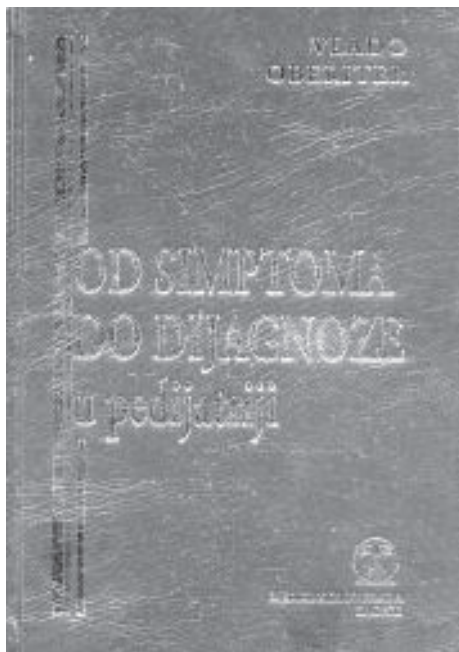
The book has eleven chapters: 1) History and neurologic examination; 2) Cranial nerves; 3) Sensory functions; 4) Motor functions; 5) Higher cortical functions; 6) Autonomic nervous system; 7) Consciousness and consciousness disorders; 8) Clinical topic diagnosis; 9) Glossary; 10) Patterns of neurological examination; and 11) References. Numerous illustrations accompanying the text make the book easy to read and to understand. The book has 291 pages.

Medical history and neurological examination are presented in detail in the first chapter of the book. The chapter on cranial nerves explains in detail the clinical examination of each cranial nerve. There is a brief reminder of relevant anatomical and physiological characteristics of every cranial nerve, and a description of the basic topical

diagnosis at various levels of damage. The chapters on sensory functions and on motor functions provide a detailed description with illustrations of the clinical examination of the sensory and motor system. The evaluation of general motor functions, innervation areas of each nerve, and methods of identification of motor and sensory disorders are presented, with special reference to distinction between peripheral nerve and central pathway disorders. In the chapter on higher cortical functions, the basis of speech, gnosis and praxis as well as of their disorders are discussed. The basic features of cognition, assessment of cognition, along with evaluation and quantification of cognitive impairments are clearly described. The chapter on autonomic nervous system presents in detail the anatomical and physiological features of the autonomic nervous system, examination of the autonomic nervous system, and main disorders of the system. The consciousness and consciousness disorders chapter is a comprehensively illustrated segment of the book, in which the basis of human consciousness is presented in a simple and didactic manner. The evolution, recognition and quantification of consciousness disorders are discussed. In the chapter on clinical topic diagnosis, most common disorders of the central and peripheral nervous system are clearly presented, along with differential diagnosis and basis for reaching a topic diagnosis. The glossary is a very interesting part of the book, as it allows easy learning of neurological terminology. The chapter on the patterns of neurological examination briefly presents the reminder of neurological examination and the method of examination of mental functions.

Along with a comprehensive textual body, the book has 247 illustrations and 10 tables that clearly show the characteristics of nerve conduction, innervation areas of spinal nerves, peripheral nerves, etc. The book will be of use not only for medical students but also for general practitioners, residents in neurology, neurologists and doctors in related fields.

*Vida Demarin, Zlatko Trkanjec*



*OD SIMPTOMA DO DIJAGNOZE U PEDIJATRIJI*, by Vlado Oberiter. Medicinska naklada, Zagreb, 1999, 908 pages, ISBN 953-176-070-5

Medicinska naklada from Zagreb has pleased us with this very valuable handbook that has resulted from years and years of work of our renowned expert, Professor Vlado Oberiter, retired head of the Department of Pediatrics, Sestre milosrdnice University Hospital from Zagreb.

The book of more than 800 pages (provided with an index on 80 pages), consisting of 21 chapters, begins with comprehensive presentation of general symptoms (anemia - pallor - cyanosis - obesity - edema - headache - hyperthermia (unexplained fever) - hypothermia - hypoglycemia - coma - lymph node enlargement - emaciation - strange body odor - cry - short stature - accelerated growth and tall stature - sleep disorders - syncope - shock - hiccup - fatigue - perspiration - thirst - jaundice). This is followed by conveniently presented symptomatology encountered in clinical routine, according to body systems and regions, really a 'gold mine' for each physician, especially a pediatrician.

The basis of our work is diagnosis. Diagnosis is made on the basis of symptoms which have to be noticed, and to be able and capable to notice them we have to know them. As the author of the book puts it as a motto to his foreword: "Who knows, perceives", actually citing the great writer, philosopher and natural scientist, J.W. Goethe. An interesting and even paradoxical fact is that in numerous (stan-

dard) textbooks intended to provide a systematic presentation of diseases, each chapter begins with the name (and thus, "the diagnosis") of the disease, followed by an account of the disease symptoms, while in practice, in life, just the opposite occurs, i.e. we start from the symptoms, trying to reach the diagnosis, definite or at least a working one to base a rational choice (work-up) of tests and initial therapeutic measures upon, via these symptoms, weighting them and employing differential diagnosis thereby. To say the truth, many standard textbooks (including those in propedeutics) do contain various tables of symptoms, however, these can by no means substitute a book dedicated just to symptomatology and differential diagnosis.

In internal medicine, the first such book on symptomatology entitled *Klinička diferencijalna dijagnostika unutarnjih bolesti* (Clinical differential diagnosis of internal diseases) was written by Professor Silvije Novak (Školska knjiga, Zagreb, 1978). His high bedside diagnostic skills, the major makings of an experienced clinician, have found excellent reflection in the article *Važnost fizikalnog pregleda bolesnika za dijagnostiku* (Diagnostic significance of the patient physical examination), published in *Liječnički vjesnik* in 1951. I feel happy to have an opportunity herewith to reclaim it from oblivion.

It is a great satisfaction for a physician to succeed - on the basis of small, seemingly imperceptible and 'irrelevant' symptoms - in making the diagnosis of a serious disease that frequently evades the complex and expensive medical techniques. This is the right place to remind that the personage of Sherlock Holmes, a famous detective, who filled everyone with admiration for his far-reaching conclusions on a person derived from his observations of tiny details, was created by a physician, A. Conan Doyle, who was inspired by brilliant diagnoses made by Joseph Bell, and allegedly also by the lectures of his professor in forensic medicine. Renowned cardiologists from the United States, S. Zonereich and D.H. Spodick, in their paper published in the journal *Circulation* in 1995, entitled "Bedside skill reduces the need of laboratory testing. Competent interpretation of physical findings decreases relying on complex and expensive methods of examination", complain of the skill of heart (as well as lung) auscultation being ever poorer, even in residents and ward doctors, in spite of all lectures, seminars, audio-cassettes, video-cassettes and simulators. They explain it by inadequate bedside exercise, because this is the only way to master some of the necessary skills. As Gjuro Baglivi stated: "The patient is the best book!" In addition to vividness, our senses are highly sensitized when we are close to a patient committed to our care. I will never

forget the first days of my internship when, passing with the head doctor in front of a room, I heard him saying: "Look here, my colleague, meningitic groan is heard from this room". It was a female patient admitted during the night as a vague case. The diagnosis made from the corridor was accurate. From which book could we learn how to recognize 'meningitic groan'?!

It is true that nowadays there is enormous and potent technics for fast and accurate diagnosis. However, it is not available to all, it cannot be brought along in the bag when paying home calls, and in some critical situations it may become useless even to those who possess it. Therefore, we should train our miraculous 'computer' - the brain endowed to us by Mother Nature. And this is exactly where Professor Oberiter's handbook will be of great help to us.

Furthermore, the book provides concise (almost in telegraphese) description of more than 800 syndromes (a specific feature of pediatrics). Some may find that too much space is dedicated to rare diseases. However, when all these rare diseases are considered together (including those that proceed unrecognized or overlooked!), they turn out not to be so rare at all. In addition, the patient with a rare disease has the right to accurate diagnosis, treatment and health as

anybody else (and he doesn't care a bit, as one of my senior colleagues used to say, when something goes wrong, whether it is due to a common or rare disease). I was surprised myself that, for instance, hypertrichosis (excessive growth of the hair, generalized or local) can be a sign (or a guideline) in some thirty diseases.

The book is additionally enriched by carefully selected references, from classical to the latest publications.

A book so rich in contents, so valuable and so badly needed, could only be written with great endeavors invested by the author, with great love for the profession and science, based on genuine living with patients, on perseverance, and on years and years of highly enthusiastic work. The author has taught us once again how retirement can be fruitful and meaningful. Congratulating him, we would all be happy to see him also act 'catalytically', i.e. to stimulate other renowned experts who know so much but write so little (or did not have time to write during the years of service, being swamped with too many, frequently quite senseless commitments), to transfer their rich knowledge and experience to young generations, considering it as their personal duty (because any material compensation is out of question).

*Ljubo Barić*