Clinical Reasoning in the Health Professions
Joy Higgs, Mark Jones, Eds.
348 pp. £ 30.00
ISBN: 0 7506 0787 4

Over the past two decades or so, there has been an increasing interest in clinical reasoning, especially among primary care physicians, and a number of models have been proposed by various authors. This fascinating area is of great importance to clinical teachers, who need to have a thorough understanding of how their trainees make their decisions.

Clinical Reasoning in the Health Professions, edited by Joy Higgs and Mark Jones, is a heavyweight newcomer in this field, and deals with the subject in great detail, this time from the standpoint of the teacher in the paramedical disciplines. They have brought together a large number of learned writers (37 in all) who variously contribute to 27 chapters over 348 pages, in what is essentially a series of individual papers.

There is clearly a wealth of experience and expertise between the covers of this book. However, as a practical guide for the clinical teacher, it does rather suffer from having so many authors writing independently, with a lot of overlap but no united thread. As an illustration, the models presented by the individual contributors, while broadly similar, are not entirely synonymous with each other, so the reader has to make constant adjustments with each new chapter. Added to this is the intensely didactic style of presentation - it might have been more readable had it contained more of the readers own experience.

Aimed principally at teachers in paramedical areas such as nursing, physiotherapy and occupational therapy, I fear this book misses its target, although it may be of interest to academic researchers working in the same field.

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This book is intended for beginners in clinical neurophysiology. The book is divided into five sections. The first section discusses basic electronics and provides a good understanding of the theory of electricity, basic circuit elements, filters, amplifiers, different methods of display and principles of electrical safety.

The second section deals with EEG methods and interpretation but has a few confusing and inaccurate statements, for example, “slow waves have an increased number of phases and are composed of faster frequencies” (page 77).

The third section discusses the fundamentals of EMG and nerve conduction studies and also includes blink reflex, F-wave study, H-reflex and even a single-fiber EMG and is well-written.

The fourth part covers the basics of evoked potentials and discusses brainstem auditory evoked potentials, visual, somatosensory and motor evoked potentials. It is well-written, however, and the diagrams include single trials rather than two super-imposed replications.

The last section gives a brief but concise description of polysomnography.

In summary, this book is a good buy for beginners in clinical neurophysiology such as medical students, house officers and technicians. However, it is not a reference book and, as stated by the author, will not substitute for comprehensive texts.

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Clinical Neurophysiology
EMG, Nerve Conduction and Evoked Potentials
John W. Osselton, Editor-in-Chief
572 pp. £ 85.00
ISBN: 0-7506-11839

This is a multi-author work with five principal editors and a distinguished editor-to-chief. It is an extensive book divided into three parts. Part 1 deals with fundamentals of neurophysiology and techniques of recordings; it has many excellent illustrations and figures. Part 2 gives a detailed discussion of electromyography and nerve conduction, starting with the history of the procedure, and going on to cover anatomy and functions of peripheral nerves. It offers

Essentials of Clinical Neurophysiology
Karl E. Misulis, MD, PhD
Butterworth-Heinemann, Newton, Massachusetts, 1993
306 pp. £ 27.50
practical instruction and useful tips on techniques of electromyography (EMG), motor and sensory nerve conduction studies (NCS) with clinical implications. It also deals with single fibre EMG and discusses abilities and instrumental requirements. A special chapter is devoted to assess the autonomic nervous system supported by excellent figures and illustrations. A detailed chapter deals with pelvic floor neurophysiological procedures and outlines not only EMG but also cortical evoked potentials, including pudendal somatosensory evoked potentials (SSEP) and potentials in response to stimulation of post-urethra and the bladder neck. A special chapter deals with analysis of electromyographic activity and covers turn-amplitude analysis and automatic decomposition electromyography. This should be useful especially with newly equipped EMG machines. Part 3 deals with evoked potentials (EPs), and discusses methods, instrumentation, recording procedures and clinical applications. Different chapters are dedicated to investigation of myoclonus, EP exploration of central pain syndromes, grading of dementia, cognitive slow potential in psychiatry, EPs in systemic disorders and internal medicine, and fictitious blindness, deafness and hemianesthesia.

This is a comprehensive book covering EMG, NCS and EPs and is addressed primarily to neurophysiologists but is also useful for neurologists and technologists working towards higher qualifications. Its availability is recommended in neurophysiology laboratories and hospital libraries.

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