

NEUROLOGY IN AFRICA

CLINICAL SKILLS

AND

NEUROLOGICAL DISORDERS

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PREFACE

The main reason for writing this book is that I have spent many rewarding years working as a physician and neurologist in Africa and would like to pass on some of that experience and knowledge to students there. Neurological disorders are common in Africa and the burden there has increased significantly because of the HIV epidemic and the emerging epidemic of non-communicable diseases. Students often find neurology a difficult subject to approach and there is a need for an easily accessible guide to neurology teaching and education in Africa.

The aim of this book is for students to gain an understanding of neurology, learn the necessary clinical skills and obtain sufficient knowledge to care for patients presenting with neurological disorders. Diagnosis in neurology is based on accurate history and physical examination and this book emphasizes these principles. It is written mostly from the perspective of a general physician practising neurology rather than that of a neurologist.

The book has two sections, the first on clinical skills, with medical students in wards and clinics as its main target group and the second on neurological disorders in adults with students and doctors as its main target group. The order of chapters is based on their importance in Africa, with the most common disorders there; epilepsy, stroke, infections, coma, paraplegia and neuropathies covered in the earlier chapters. The book includes chapters on head and spinal injury and care in neurology, because of their increasing significance within Africa. The choice of content included in each chapter is guided by the experience of the author. It is therefore subjective, selective and restricted by the size of the book. I have earnestly tried to avoid repetition; however in the attempt to make each chapter self-contained some repetition was unavoidable. I have included key points summarizing each section, which I hope will assist students with review. There is also a summary list of useful medical and neurological websites at the end of the book.

The term Africa is used throughout as a handy designation to mean sub-Saharan Africa. The lists of references at the end of each chapter are intended as a general guide to reading about neurology in Africa. For further information I refer the reader to a major neurology textbook.

In writing *Neurology in Africa* I have borrowed ideas and concepts from a wide range of excellent textbooks of neurology and tropical medicine and I am deeply indebted to their authors. I apologize in advance for any weaknesses and omissions and welcome comments and criticisms. I am reminded daily by students that the Internet is the new medium for education. With that in mind the book is available free online at www.uib.no/cih/en/resources/neurology-in-africa.

The gap between need and resources is well documented in Africa and it is my experience that neurology is no different. It is my sincere hope that students and doctors in Africa will find this book a useful step towards filling that gap in neurology.

DEDICATION

To my son Patrick for the journey together

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	III
PREFACE	V
1 HISTORY AND EXAMINATION	9
2 LOCALIZATION	43
3 PUBLIC HEALTH	63
4 EPILEPSY	75
5 STROKE	97
6 NEUROLOGICAL INFECTIONS	119
7 PROTOZOAL AND HELMINTHIC INFECTIONS	157
8 NEUROLOGICAL ILLNESS IN HIV DISEASE	187
9 COMA AND TRANSIENT LOSS OF CONSCIOUSNESS	209
10 PARAPLEGIA NON TRAUMATIC	227
11 DISORDERS OF PERIPHERAL NERVES	255
12 CRANIAL NERVE DISORDERS	283
13 MYOPATHIES AND MYASTHENIA GRAVIS	307
14 MOVEMENT DISORDERS AND MOTOR NEURONE DISEASE	325
15 HEADACHE AND FACIAL PAIN	347
16 INTRACRANIAL TUMOURS	363
17 DEMENTIA	381
18 INHERITED NEUROLOGICAL DISORDERS	395
19 HEAD AND SPINAL INJURY	409
20 CARE IN NEUROLOGY	427
INDEX	443
ABBREVIATIONS	455
USEFUL WEBSITES	459