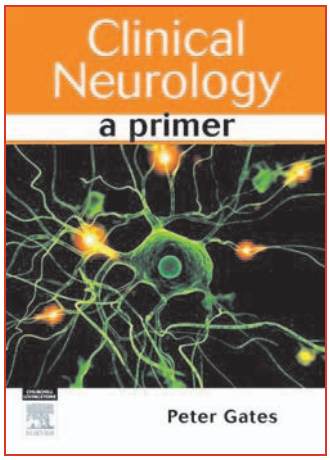
A cure for "neurophobia"

Clinical neurology: a primer. Peter Gates. Sydney: Churchill Livingstone, 2010 (450 pp, $90.00). ISBN 9780729539357.



NEUROLOGY is regarded as a difficult specialty but, paradoxically, neurological illnesses are common. Clinicians will come across a large number of patients with neurological symptoms — headaches, strokes, dementia and a variety of pain syndromes, to name a few — in their day-to-day practice, irrespective of their scope of practice.

I have been looking for a good clinical neurology textbook to recommend to my students for several years now, and Associate Professor Peter Gates, neurologist at Geelong Hospital and the University of Melbourne, Victoria, has come up with a gem.

I read the book from cover to cover and thoroughly enjoyed it. I also gained new skills in teaching neurology. Gates has successfully demystified neurology. *Clinical neurology* will help cure students and health care practitioners of their "neurophobia" for good, and readers will discover how easy and enjoyable it really is to study and practise neurology.

The book starts with an introduction to clinically oriented neuroanatomy that has a novel approach. The author likens the nervous system to a map grid with longitudes (ascending sensory pathways and descending motor pathways) and latitudes (cortical signs, brainstem cranial nerves, nerve roots and peripheral nerves). He uses a number of cases to explain the concepts involved in diagnosis in a way that is easily accessible to the novice.

Subsequent chapters take the reader through the neurological examination process and common neurological presentations from a symptom-oriented perspective.

Gates then poses the question, "After the history and examination, what next?", and goes through all possible answers from "no idea what the clinical problem is" to "seeking a second opinion" and "understanding the principles of solving complex clinical problems".

The book is accompanied by a DVD that demonstrates how to perform a neurological examination and includes a series of high-resolution videos on some abnormal neurological signs. Both undergraduate and postgraduate students will find this to be a valuable resource for mastering clinical neurology skills by observing an experienced neurologist in action.

The book is aimed at medical students, young doctors and general practitioners; however, clinicians and neurologists should also find it useful.

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