

Preface

Seizures: Medical Causes and Management is intended to present a comprehensive discussion of acute symptomatic seizures. These are common in clinical practice and are encountered by a wide range of clinicians. I believe that a book such as this one is needed as the topic appears to have fallen between the two stools of medicine and neurology. Neurologists and epileptologists are frequently asked to assess and advise on management of individuals with these situation-related seizures. This topic has been given relatively scant treatment in the medical literature and in standard textbooks, possibly because it straddles many specialties. The present book is intended at least in part to address this shortfall. It aims to provide in one volume a comprehensive treatment of the causes and management of symptomatic seizures associated with a wide variety of medical disorders. It should prove a valuable resource to those caring for patients who are at risk of seizures in the setting of systemic illness. I hope that neurologists, internists, anesthesiologists, and intensive care unit and emergency physicians will all find it of value.

Chapter 1 serves as a broad introduction, discussing general principles and introducing important terms and definitions. Chapter 2 is an attempt to unify a discussion of the pathophysiology of acute symptomatic seizures, although this is also discussed where appropriate in later chapters. Chapter 3 deals with acute symptomatic seizures caused by underlying primary central nervous system insult. Chapters 4 to 16 are divided into those dealing with specific etiologic areas of acute symptomatic seizures, such as seizures resulting from organ failure, alcohol-related seizures, and seizures in cancer patients. The important topic of the differential diagnosis between seizure and syncope is discussed in Chapter 17. I felt it important to include a specific chapter on seizures in the tropics (Chapter 18). Chapter 19 discusses issues pertaining to the intensive care unit, and Chapter 20 deals with symptomatic status epilepticus. The final chapter (Chapter 21) is a discussion of the use of anticonvulsants in systemically sick patients. Although there is inevitable overlap between chapters, this has been kept to a minimum.

I am grateful to all the authors, for both their excellent contributions and their patience as I worked through this project while moving between continents. I am delighted that Marc Dichter agreed to write the Foreword. I am especially grateful to Paul Dolgert and Craig Adams at Humana Press for their help and understanding. Finally, and most of all, I thank my wife, Breda, and children, Niamh and Saorlaith, for tolerating and supporting me.

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