

Preface

It is with great pleasure that we write this preface. Relatively few books, especially in recent years, have been published on the topic of “Hepatic Encephalopathy” (HE). Considerable changes have occurred in this field over the last few decades so a comprehensive update is in order. We have called upon virtually all of the leaders in this field to contribute with their colleagues chapters on HE in their specific area of expertise.

The first introductory chapter outlines the major changes in nomenclature and classification in the last few decades. Specifically, a new term, Covert HE, has been introduced to replace the less satisfactory term minimal HE.

The roles of ammonia, neural inflammation, general inflammation, oxidative stress, and endogenous benzodiazepines in the pathogenesis of HE are discussed by the leading authorities in these areas. This is followed by chapters on the diagnosis of overt and covert (or minimal) HE followed by EEG changes and brain imaging seen in HE.

The treatment section features the long-standing nonabsorbable disaccharides for the treatment of HE. Antibiotic treatment is discussed as well as the newer agent ornithine phenylacetate. We intended to have Gerald Kircheis contribute a chapter on L-ornithine L-aspartate treatment, but he was incapacitated by a significant medical problem which precluded his participation.

The last section of special topics features a hodgepodge of interesting topics within the field of HE.

We hope you enjoy this new book on “Hepatic Encephalopathy” as much as we did in putting it together.

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