

RESTOR 00058

Book Review

H.J. Markowitsch (Ed.), *Transient Global Amnesia and Related Disorders*, Hogrefe & Huber Publs., Toronto, 1990, 219 pp.

Transient global amnesia (TGA) is a relatively new phenomenon in brain research and has not been previously dealt with in book form. The present volume, consisting of 20 chapters, provides an up-to-date survey of the state of the art and will be of particular interest to practicing clinicians, neurologists, and neuroscientists in general.

The book considers in turn both aspects of the disease and propagation of hypotheses with respect to its etiology: following a general introduction by the editor, L.R. Caplan provides an integrative review of transient global amnesia. J.A.M. Frederiks emphasizes that TGA might be an amnesic transient ischemic attack; a similar position is held by M. Scarpa and A. Colombo. Other authors provide evidence for relating TGA to brain damage (J. Brillman, D.C. Haas, J. Ghika and J. Bogousslavsky), to epilepsy (R. Gallassi and A. Morreale, N. Kapur), and to migraine (M.J. Kushner and D.J. Gzesh).

The French group of B. Croisile, B. Laurent, and M. Trillet has three chapters in which the occurrence of transient memory disturbances after administration of benzodiazepines or in atypical semiologies is discussed, and in which cerebral blood flow measurements and pharmacological tests were performed during an attack of TGA.

New developments in visualizing the status of the brain in patients with TGA are also emphasized by a Japanese group (Fujii et al.). Using positron emission tomography, these authors measured the regional cerebral blood flow and volume, oxygen extraction fraction, and the cerebral metabolic rate of oxygen in four patients with TGA. They concluded from their observation "that the development of TGA does not depend on focal tissue damage or persistent circulatory disturbances, which might be shown by PET" (p. 135).

While these measurements were performed after the end of the amnesic episode, it would have added to the book's comprehensive coverage if a chapter on related measurements (PET or SPECT) during TGA had been included as well (see Stillhard et al., 1990).

The last chapters of the book discuss the neuropsychological follow-up of TGA cases. Here the views of Mazzucchi and Parma on the one hand and

their compatriots, Colombo and Scarpa, on the other are in some disagreement, the former emphasizing the existence of persisting deficits, the latter negating them.

Hinge and Jensen discuss the prognosis of TGA, Markowitsch refers to related amnesic states of psychogenic origin, and in the final chapter, Parwatarikar provides a well-readable and lucidly written chapter on the medicolegal aspects of TGA.

Although an integrating final chapter or discussion is lacking, the controversy discussed in my eyes reflects the true picture of the disease which was unknown 30 years ago and which even nowadays is relatively obscure. This fact can be attributed to the transiency of the disease (usually less than one day), and to the particular sample of the population affected, namely old individuals. On the other hand, the growing number of the elderly especially in industrialized societies and the continuing isolation of old people makes it particularly important to diagnose abnormal psychic states accurately and instantly.

The present book will be of particular help in alerting physicians to this problem and may also help to foster research on the phenomenon of TGA. TGA is furthermore of special interest as it constitutes an abnormality in the brain's function which may be short lasting and without major long term consequences, but which, if sufficiently investigated, may be preventable in part, or may even reveal the existence of related, but otherwise undetected, brain and/or personality abnormalities which may be approachable therapeutically.

I would welcome a wide dissemination of this compact and concise book which contains very detailed name and subject indices and will be stimulating to many researchers in the field of amnesic disorders as well as to the practicing doctor.

Reference:

Stillhard, G., Landis, T., Schiess, R., Regard, M. and Sialer, G., Bitemporal hypoperfusion in transient global amnesia: 99m-HM-PAO SPECT and neuropsychological findings during and after an attack, *J. Neurol., Neurosurgery, Psychiatry*, 53 (1990) 339-342.

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