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Book Reviews

Effects of nicotine on biological systems II

P. B. S. CLARKE, M. QUIK, F. ADLKOFER AND K. THURAU

Basel: Birkhauser Verlag, 1995, 424 pages, $116.00.

This book summarizes the content of the conference 'The effects of nicotine on biological systems II', 21–24 July 1994 in Saint-Adèle, Canada.

It is well structured with a short overview of the subjects discussed followed by six chapters. Each chapter is a mixture of overviews and original articles. The major part of the book addresses nicotine receptors of the brain, how nicotine reacts with the receptors, and the possible consequences on neuronal development and function. The reader is provided with a detailed as well as an overall insight into this field. Therefore, the chapters will be of interest to both scientists with specific interest for this subject and readers without specific preferences in this field.

The classical discussion whether or not the smoking habit is caused by a pharmacological dependence to nicotine is also given some attention. Both views are given equal priority making the test interesting and useful for those with interest in smoking prevention. It is appreciated that both views are acknowledged as interesting, and convincing research material supports both opinions. It is possible that implementation of theories from both sides could contribute significantly to improve smoking cessation programmes and smoking prevention measures.

A newer field of great interest is the beneficial effect of smoking/nicotine on some chronic diseases such as Alzheimer's disease, ulcerative colitis, Parkinson's disease and other diseases. The literature and epidemiological evidence is summarized and critically discussed. The negative relationships between smoking and the diseases have been somewhat controversial. The discussion, however, leaves one fairly convinced about the beneficial effects of nicotine on some neurological diseases. It will be interesting to follow the development in this field and much is still to be learned about the effects of nicotine on immunological systems.

Smoking affects the immune system significantly but this book does not give much attention to these important aspects of nicotine's effects. Researchers interested in this field may find the book disappointing.

Overall, the book gives an insight into how smoking/nicotine affects some biological systems. The logical structure and mixture of overviews and original articles makes it suitable and beneficial reading for scientists with a special interest in the field, as well as others with merely a common interest in the subjects.

E. Juel Jensen

Textbook of respiratory medicine, 2nd edition, Vols 1 & 2

J. F. MURRAY AND J. A. NADEL

Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders Company, 1994.

The aim of this extensive textbook is to combine basic science and clinical aspects of pulmonary medicine. One hundred and forty-one experts in their fields have contributed to this comprehensive work which broadens the understanding of clinical and experimental subjects effectively by dealing with both laboratory science and the clinical expressions of diseases.

This textbook compares well to others which are more clinically oriented or more related to physiology or pharmacology. It is obvious that the understanding of an area of medicine is far better when a broad view is applied.

This textbook is of interest to all who work with any aspect of pulmonary medicine be it laboratory or clinical. It should be easily accessible in clinics, and those who work mainly within pulmonary medicine should have their own personal copy.

Unfortunately it is not easily transportable, being a book in two volumes with a total weight of 8·64 kg, a volume of 8·5 cm^3 and almost 3000 pages. It would be advisable to have a more transportable media such as CD-rom. The textbook is much too large as an introduction for future specialists, but as an 'up-date' text and introduction to a specific subject it is very valuable.

Unfortunately it is not possible to load all the knowledge into the human brain and even limited subjects like pulmonary medicine have many areas that constantly change as new knowledge is obtained. This textbook functions as a store of knowledge, and can be recommended to all who need a

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