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Landmark Papers in Neurology

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Landmark Papers in Neurology, an addition to the Landmark Papers collection (Oxford University Press), was published in 2015 and edited by Martin R. Turner (University of Oxford) and Matthew C. Kiernan (University of Sydney). They chose 16 neurology topics and assigned them to 25 authors, almost exclusively English-language specialists and all of them internationally recognized in their field. Needless to say, choosing the topics must have been a challenging task. For the same reason, despite its 542 pages, this work does not cover tumours and nervous system infections, or abnormal movements. This collection does not really fit into the category of history of neurology, since each article is simply summarized, rather than published in full. While the historical background is presented, this work focuses primarily on the current context. The editors wisely chose a rigorous structure, involving 1–3 pages and 4 systematic sections: background, methods, results and conclusions/discussion. At the end of each chapter, any unresolved questions are addressed, followed by a list of references. Despite the number of authors, the style is coherent, thereby helping readers to access information without having to read the entire book.

The first chapter covers technical progress, showing that neurology has advanced mainly through new developments in the fundamental sciences: physics, information technology, biology and genetics. This chapter features the Nobel Prize laureates along with their landmark articles. The chapter on coma stands out for 2 reasons. It indicates that the actual care of patients has existed only for 50 years and highlights the clinical neurologist's role by confirming the historical value of C.M. Fisher's 1969 paper, centred on the clinical examination of comatose patients. The chapter on headache focuses almost exclusively on migraine but perfectly covers etiopathogenic theories and the treatments successively introduced over the course of the twentieth century. The fact that this type of work includes 'functional neurological symptoms' is a pleasant surprise. Pierre Briquet is honoured as a pioneer for his descriptions published in 1859. The contributions of Pierre Janet and Sigmund Freud are given appropriate attention, but it is quite surprising that

Jean-Martin Charcot is only briefly cited. Furthermore, Joseph Babinski's sign, a major contribution, is not even mentioned.

It is regrettable that in the chapter on stroke, the 1993 isolation of CADASIL by Bousser and Tournier-Lasserre [1] and her team is not at all mentioned.

Historically, the isolation of Parkinson's disease is accurate, even though Jean-Martin Charcot's eminent role is barely evoked. Although fetal neuronal transplants are featured as a novel treatment, it is unfortunate that deep brain stimulation as proposed by Benabid et al. [2] in 1987 is not covered. Reference to a 1975 history of neurology article touches on the history of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, but none of the original papers, that is, those by Jean Cruveilhier, Guillaume Duchenne de Boulogne, Jean-Martin Charcot or Jacob Lockhart Clarke, is analysed. The chapter on dementia is more comprehensive.

What timeframe is necessary to consider a publication as a 'landmark paper'? This book covers publications as recent as 2012. Is there enough perspective in these cases to assess a paper's historic value? The chapter on mitochondrial diseases explores a new area in which there are still new developments and the possibility of conceptual changes.

Given the abundance of seminal papers in the early days of myology, the authors had to begin its history in the 1950s, thereby ignoring the nineteenth-century founders and focusing instead on current diagnostic, histopathological and pathogenic progress. In the chapter on peripheral neuropathy, it is surprising that Jules Tinel, Paul Hoffmann and their eponymous signs are not mentioned.

Finally, for the concluding chapters on neuromuscular junction disorders, neuro-immunology and multiple sclerosis, there is such a gap between the clinical and etiopathogenic concepts established in recent years and the initial description that the authors had to select one seminal article from among several possibilities across different countries. Thus, myasthenia is credited to Thomas Willis, who described it 200 years before Samuel Wilks in 1877, whereas the most famous publication, that of Wilhelm Erb, is not cited. Constantin von Economo's description of lethargic encephalitis is perfectly presented and grouped under neuro-immunology, but René Cruchet's name is not mentioned. The first multiple sclerosis paper considered is in the anatomical pathology field and written by James Walker Dawson in 1916; the nineteenth-century forerunners, especially Jean-Martin Charcot and Alfred Vulpian, are not given any credit.

Overall, this book examines contemporary data relative to their twentieth-century origins instead of their real historical origins,

which date further back in time. This is because the editors opted for a neurology-oriented approach, rather than an approach based on the history of neurology. As Dutch, German, Russian, Italian, Spanish and French authors were not considered, the book focuses primarily on English-language works. There is little in the way of iconography. This book can direct readers to the authentic sources, or to a real history of neurology book [3] in lieu of works that are only available in libraries, such as *Classic Papers in Neurology* by Michael Swash and James John Corbett, published in 2000.
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References

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