Introduction to Epilepsy
Introduction to Epilepsy

Edited by
Gonzalo Alarcón

Antonio Valentín
Institute of Psychiatry, King’s College London, London, and King’s College Hospital, London, UK
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this book. Readers are strongly advised to pay careful attention to
information provided by the manufacturer of any drugs or equipment
that they plan to use.
To Professors Colin D. Binnie and Charles E. Polkey, who inspired, developed and taught Epileptology at the Denmark Hill Campus, London, for over 20 years.
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Contributors

Nozomi Akanuma
Consultant Psychiatrist, South London & Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust; Visiting Senior Lecturer in Clinical Neuroscience, Institute of Psychiatry, King’s College London, London, UK

Gonzalo Alarcón
Reader and Honorary Consultant in Clinical Neurophysiology, Institute of Psychiatry and Institute of Epileptology, King’s College London, London, UK

R. Arunachalam
Consultant, Clinical Neurophysiology, Southampton University Hospitals NHS Trust, Southampton, UK

Sarah H. Bernard
Consultant Psychiatrist, Child and Adolescent Learning Disability, The Michael Rutter Centre, London, UK

Frank M. C. Besag
Consultant Neuropsychiatrist, CAMHS-LD, Mid Beds Clinic, SEPT: South Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust, Bedfordshire, UK

Istvan Bodi
Consultant Neuropathologist, Visiting Senior Lecturer, Institute of Psychiatry, King’s College London, London UK

Stephen Brown
Consultant Neuropsychiatrist, Honorary Professor of Developmental Neuropsychiatry, Peninsula Medical School, Exeter, UK

Franz Brunnhuber
Consultant, Department of Clinical Neurophysiology, King’s College Hospital, London, UK

Antonella Cerquiglini
Department of Child Neurology and Psychiatry, University La Sapienza, Rome, Italy

J. Helen Cross
Head of Neuroscience Unit, UCL Institute of Child Health, London, UK

R. Shane Delamont
Consultant Neurologist, King’s College Hospital, London, UK

Archana Desurkar
Department of Paediatric Neurology, Evelina Children’s and St Thomas’ Hospitals, London, UK

Lee Drummond
Senior Chief Technician, Dept Clinical Neurophysiology, King’s College Hospital, London, UK

Rona Eade
Epilepsy Information Manager, Epilepsy Society, Buckinghamshire, UK

Robert D. C. Elwes
Consultant Neurologist and Clinical Neurophysiologist, King’s College Hospital and Institute of Epileptology, London, UK

Bidi Evans
Department of Clinical Neurophysiology, King’s College Hospital, London, UK

Peter Fenwick
Consultant Neuropsychiatrist emeritus, Epilepsy Unit, Maudsley Hospital

Colin D. Ferrie
Consultant Paediatric Neurologist, General Infirmary of Leeds, Leeds, UK

Paul L. Furlong
Wellcome Laboratory for MEG Studies, School of Life and Health Sciences, Aston University, Birmingham, UK
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Laura H. Goldstein</td>
<td>Professor of Clinical Neuropsychology, Institute of Psychiatry, King’s College London, London, UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sally Gomersall</td>
<td>Epilepsy Society, Buckinghamshire, UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sushma Goyal</td>
<td>Department of Clinical Neurophysiology, King’s College Hospital, London, UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane Hanna</td>
<td>Director, Epilepsy Bereaved, Oxon, UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yvonne Hart</td>
<td>Consultant Neurologist, Royal Victoria Infirmary, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominic C. Heaney</td>
<td>Consultant Neurologist, National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery, University College London, London, UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graham E. Holder</td>
<td>Clinical Neurophysiologist, King’s College Hospital, London, UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrinalini Honavar</td>
<td>Department of Clinical Neuropathology, King’s College Hospital, London, UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaine Hughes</td>
<td>Consultant Paediatric Neurologist, King’s College Hospital, London, UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jozef M. Jarosz</td>
<td>Consultant, Neuroimaging Unit, King’s College Hospital, London, UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John G. R. Jefferys</td>
<td>Professor of Neuroscience, Neuronal Networks Group, School of Clinical and Experimental Medicine, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane Juler</td>
<td>Division of Neuroscience, Guy’s, King’s and St Thomas’ School of Medicine, London, UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathias Koepp</td>
<td>Professor, Institute of Neurology, University College London, London, UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michalis Koutroumanidis</td>
<td>Consultant Clinical Neurophysiologist and Neurologist, Honorary Senior Lecturer, GKT School of Medicine, King’s College, London, UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maureen Lahiff</td>
<td>Academic Co-ordinator and Lecturer, School of Public Health, University of California, Berkeley, Berkeley, CA, USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louis Lemieux</td>
<td>Professor of Physics Applied to Medicine, Institute of Neurology, University College London, London, UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David McCormick</td>
<td>Clinical Director – Child Health, King’s College Hospital, London, UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brian Meldrum</td>
<td>Professor of Experimental Neurology, Centre for Neuroscience, King’s College London, London, UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John D. C. Mellers</td>
<td>Consultant Neuropsychiatrist, Maudsley Hospital, London, UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicholas Moran</td>
<td>Consultant, Department of Neurology, King’s College Hospital, London, UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Moriarty</td>
<td>Consultant Neuropsychiatrist, South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust, London, UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robin G. Morris</td>
<td>Professor of Neuropsychology and Head of the Neuropsychology Department, King’s College Hospital, London, UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nandini Mullatti</td>
<td>Consultant in Clinical Neurophysiology and Epilepsy, King’s College Hospital, London, UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer Nightingale</td>
<td>Epilepsy Nurse Specialist, Barts and the London NHS Trust, London, UK</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of contributors

T. J. von Oertzen
Consultant Neurologist/Epileptologist and Honorary Senior Lecturer Atkinson Morley Neuroscience Centre, St. George’s Hospital, London, UK

Corina O’Neill
Specialist Children’s Service, Wood Street Health Centre CDC, London, UK

Philip N. Patsalos
Professor of Clinical Pharmacology, Dept of Clinical and Experimental Epilepsy, Institute of Neurology, University College London, London, UK

Stella Pearson
Epilepsy Information Services, Epilepsy Society, Buckinghamshire, UK

Charles E. Polkey
Consultant Neurosurgeon, Department of Neuroscience, Institutes of Psychiatry and Epileptology King’s College London, London, UK

Ronit Pressler
Department of Clinical Neurophysiology, King’s College Hospital, London, UK

Edward H. Reynolds
Institute of Epileptology, King’s College London, London, UK

Mark P. Richardson
Paul Getty III Professor of Epilepsy, Director, Institute of Epileptology, King’s College London, London, UK

Leone Ridsdale
Professor of Neurology and General Practice, Department of Clinical Neuroscience, King’s College Hospital, London, UK

Robert Robinson
Consultant Paediatric Neurologist, Great Ormond Street Hospital, London, UK

Greg Rogers
GPwSI in epilepsy, East Kent Health Authority, Kent, UK

Euan M. Ross
Emeritus Professor, King’s College London, London, UK

Richard P. Selway
Consultant Neurosurgeon, King’s College Hospital, London, UK

Stefano Seri
Wellcome Laboratory for MEG Studies, School of Life and Health Sciences, Aston University; Comprehensive Paediatric Epilepsy Programme, The Birmingham Children’s Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, Birmingham, UK

Simeran Sharma
Clinical Physiologist, Neurophysiology and Epilepsies, Guy’s and St. Thomas’ NHS Foundation Trust, London, UK

Graeme J. Sills
Lecturer in Pharmacology, University of Liverpool, Liverpool, UK

Andrew Simmons
Reader in Neuroimaging/Consultant Clinical Scientist, Institute of Psychiatry, King’s College London, UK

Shiri Spector
Psychotherapy Unit, King’s College Hospital, London, UK

Mark Stevenson
Clinical Physiologist/Manager, Neurophysiology and Epilepsies, Guy’s and St. Thomas’ NHS Foundation Trust, London, UK

Jade N. Thai
Wellcome Laboratory for MEG Studies, School of Life and Health Sciences, Aston University, Birmingham, UK

Brian Toone
Department of Psychological Medicine, King’s College Hospital, London, UK

Antonio Valentín
Lecturer in Epilepsy, Institute of Psychiatry and Institute of Epileptology, King’s College London, London, UK

Nuria T. Villagra
Visiting SpR in Neuropathology, Department of Clinical Neuropathology, King’s College Hospital, London, UK
List of contributors

Matthew Walker
Professor of Neurology, Institute of Neurology, National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery, London, UK

William Whitehouse
Clinical Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Medicine & Health Sciences, University of Nottingham, Nottingham, UK
Foreword
by Dr Edward H. Reynolds

The Fund, the Centre and the Institute
In the summer of 1991 a group of 10 professional colleagues involved in nearly every aspect of the multi-disciplinary subject of epilepsy, and who were working in several physically related but, at that time, administratively unrelated medical institutions in South London, agreed to combine their expertise in a major initiative that had three strands. First, a charity, The Fund for Epilepsy, was registered in December 1992. Second, a new comprehensive clinical Centre for the treatment and care of children and adults with epilepsy was opened at the Maudsley Hospital in July 1994, but transferred to King’s College Hospital under reorganized Neuroscience arrangements in 1995. Third, in November 1994 the world’s first university-based academic Institute of Epileptology was launched at King’s College London.

The clinical Centre provides epilepsy services to a population of 4 million people in South London and the South East of England.

Since 1995 the various parent institutions of the Institute of Epileptology have themselves all combined under the umbrella of King’s College London. Although clinical neurosciences, including the Centre for Epilepsy, are based at King’s College Hospital, the three hospitals of Guy’s, King’s and St. Thomas’ are now incorporated into a single Medical School and the post-graduate Institute of Psychiatry and its associated Maudsley Hospital are also now a School at King’s College London.

The virtual Institute of Epileptology now has over 60 personnel working in every discipline related to epilepsy, within these various institutions of King’s College.

A generous private donation from Paul Getty III has enabled King’s College to establish the Paul Getty III Chair in Epilepsy, to which a recent Chair of Paediatric Epilepsy has also been added. The Fund for Epilepsy has recently combined with the Epilepsy Research Fund, ERF, to establish a single national research charity, ERUK. There are plans for the research facilities of the Institute of Epileptology to be transferred to a new Neurosciences institution at the Denmark Hill Campus of King’s College in the next few years.

The MSc Course in Epilepsy
From the beginning one of the main objectives of the Institute of Epileptology has been teaching, in addition to research. In 1995 it established the world’s first university degree course in association with King’s College. The course is open to post-graduates from varied backgrounds, e.g. neurology, neurosurgery, psychiatry, paediatrics, clinical neurophysiology, pharmacology, pharmacy, industry, psychology, nursing and social sciences. It may be undertaken on a full-time basis for one year or a part-time basis for two years. It has been one of the most successful of King’s College MSc Courses with over 150 students from many countries graduating over the last 12 years and thus training a much-needed new generation of epileptologists.

This book is based on the current teaching course of the Institute of Epileptology MSc in Epilepsy at King’s College. Most but not all the lectures are from members of the Institute within King’s College itself but a few distinguished teachers from other institutions in the UK have kindly agreed to contribute to this MSc Course and are represented in this book.

Reference
Reynolds EH (ed.). Scientific meeting for the launch of the Institute of Epileptology, King’s College University of London. Epilepsia 1995; Supplement 1.
Preface

‘Even when they teach, men learn’.

Seneca ‘The Younger’, c 4 Bc–Ad 65. Epistulae Morales

Learning and teaching any discipline is necessarily complex. Relevant concepts and related subtle hues need to be intertwined in the appropriate order and proportion for the mix to settle solidly. Yet, time erodes it fast. Despite epilepsy being one of the most common neurological conditions, there are surprisingly few formal academic qualifications and teaching textbooks on Epileptology. The present volume compiles the essence of our 16-year experience in training epileptologists from all over the world in the Masters in Science Course in Epilepsy (MSc in Epilepsy) at King’s College London. When we initially set up this course, we met a degree of scepticism suggesting that Epileptology was not a broad enough discipline to provide teaching for a full-year MSc. Needless to say that this proved not to be the case. However, students and professionals wanting to specialize in epilepsy often have difficulties in finding a textbook pitched to the appropriate level of learning, as textbooks tend to be either too elementary, or too encyclopaedic, or too specialized. We have chosen a structural approach starting with elementary fundamental concepts building up to socio-economic issues, while covering all aspects of Epileptology. Each chapter has been adapted to the specific nature of the topic. In our experience, students find most difficult the fundamental but conceptually complex concepts necessary to understand Neuroscience, Basic Epileptology and Classifications of seizures and syndromes. Consequently, those chapters have been structured as written tutorials, containing multiple tables, bullet points, clarifying text boxes and simple diagrams. For the chapters on practical issues, a down-to-earth approach has been adopted by virtue of clear hands-on advice aided by multiple bullet points, illustrations and tables. Finally, those subjects currently evolving have been critically reviewed by leading experts on the topic. The end product is a volume that would benefit a large variety of professionals seeking deep and practical knowledge and updates on epilepsy, should they be general practitioners, technicians, nurses, students, researchers, auditors, specialist registrars, consultants or patients suffering with epilepsy.

Each chapter contains a limited number of key reading references in addition to ‘learning objectives’. The latter, we believe, constitute a novel approach in Epileptology, which will aid the reader in focusing their learning by identifying the key concepts, skills and knowledge required to master the subject.

Finally, we would greatly appreciate any constructive criticism, which could lead to improvements in this textbook. Please send any comments to gonzalo.alarcon@kcl.ac.uk.
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