Inflammatory Diseases of the Central Nervous System
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Preface

When Richard Ransohoff, Steve Wesselingh and I first met to consider editing a book dedicated to inflammatory diseases of the brain, we were all enthused by the important messages it could convey and the niche it could assume. We wanted to convey the sense of excitement that is operative in this field and how new knowledge in basic immunology and its unique nuances within the brain have seeded novel perspectives concerning the pathogenesis and treatment of both autoimmune and infectious diseases of this exquisitely complex organ. For too long, undergraduates have been taught inaccurate dogma concerning the nexus between the immune and nervous systems. This book aims to dispel that dogma and to provide an articulate account of our current understanding of the complex interactions that are operative between immune and neural cells, both in the healthy state and in the context of disease, where not only the nature but also the magnitude of the inflammatory response can be a key determinant of whether it is reparative or pathogenic.

The organization of the book is designed to be both user friendly and easy to negotiate for the practicing clinician. The contents are divided into a section dedicated to basic immunology, with special attention given to features specific and relevant to neuro-inflammation; a section focusing on autoimmune diseases; a section that concentrates on microbiological and traumatic challenges to the central nervous system; and finally, a section dedicated to therapy, providing both generic principles and valuable insights relevant to specific infections, including HIV, as well as to the management of autoimmune disease, in particular multiple sclerosis. The book should be a valuable reference for both undergraduates and clinicians but also for basic scientists who wish to establish a broad knowledge base in order to provide a context to their specific research focus.

It has been a privilege to work with Richard Ransohoff and Steve Wesselingh on this book. They are truly leaders in the field of inflammatory diseases of the brain and their complementary interests, one directed to basic immunology and its application to autoimmune disease and the other to infectious diseases, have helped to provide this book with its unique perspective. They have worked tirelessly to bring this project to its fruition. The contributing authors have also provided us with an outstanding set of chapters and I thank them for their dedication to the cause and patience as the book has gone through its various iterations.

I would also like to thank key people at Cambridge University Press for their patience and enthusiasm for this work. In particular, I would like to thank Nicholas Dunton and Dawn Preston who have overseen the project. Special thanks also to Carmel McFarlane, my PA, who has maintained her dedication to the cause throughout, and who has applied herself to the significant task of collating the work with a combination of good humour and skill. My thanks also to Agnes Wong for her considerable role in proofreading the manuscripts.