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Informed knowledge of the outcome of disease and its treatment are of critical importance to patients and clinicians throughout the medical world. As treatment technology becomes increasingly sophisticated and costly, health care planners and providers are also looking to this information to make decisions on cost-effective services.

In many specialties, such as neurology and neurosurgery, the absence of extensive outcome studies and agreed measures of outcome in different conditions can make this information difficult to obtain. This book seeks to help in providing a succinct and practical review of the clinical course, treatment options and rehabilitation possibilities for the majority of conditions encountered in clinical practice. Particular attention has been given to the evaluation of severity and outcome of each disorder and to advice on comparing risks and benefits of treatment. Some treatments are of course well supported by data, others are empirical and yet others disappointingly poorly documented. This resource will therefore prove invaluable to all involved in informing patients of treatment options and making important cost-efficient decisions on care. It should also be welcomed in the planning of clinical trials for potential new therapies and as a reference in medico-legal work.

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Outcomes in neurological and neurosurgical disorders

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to information provided by the manufacturer of any drugs or equipment they plan to use.

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PREFACE

As neurology and neurosurgery become more and more concerned with therapy there is a need to consider the results of the different treatment options in a strictly comparative mode. As new strategies for treatment of these disorders are devised the question has to be asked whether any new treatment supersedes, becomes part of the management of a condition, or is used only in certain circumstances. Since much treatment in neurology and neurosurgery has been developed empirically, evidence for efficacy is, in many instances, surprisingly sparse. Other treatments, for example, the treatment of cerebral aneurysms, or the use of aspirin in stroke prevention have been subjected to rigorous evaluation in multi-centre and, in some instances, in international clinical trials. In this book most conditions treated by neurologists or neurosurgeons are discussed in relation to the outcome of treatment. Only when the outcome of a given therapy is known can its value in relation to other treatments be considered, and full, informed advice be given to a patient. In a sense, this process is an extension of knowledge about prognosis. The reader will notice in this book the different approaches to the problem of outcome taken by the authors of the different chapters, and reflect that these relate to the differing levels of effectiveness of treatment, or of understanding of the disease under discussion. In some areas it is apparent that there is much data but, in others, the data are more descriptive than analytical. Clearly, there is a long way to go in the search for conquest of neurological disease.

Information about the outcomes of different treatments is important not only to the physician or surgeon and the patient and family but also, in an era of cost constraints, to the health provider and the health purchaser. Indeed, decisions about the availability of treatments are increasingly made, not by individual physicians and patients, but by the health providers and purchasers with whom they are associated. The media throughout the world are full of stories concerning health care denied by such organisations, and it is clearly important for all concerned to have access to a source of information that can be used in approaching such decisions, both when they have to be made and when they have to be argued. In addition, there is a need for a source of data suitable for those physicians and surgeons, and lawyers, engaged in medico-legal practice in describing the expected outcome of certain procedures. This book may provide a source for such searches. In our individual clinical practices we all must

aspire to achieve results comparable to the best. Only by knowing what is best practice can we begin to realise this aim.

This book consists of the contributions of many authors. As editor, I am grateful to them for their contributions, for their work in agreeing to the task set them in considering the outcomes of treatments in neurological and neurosurgical disease, and for their forbearance in modifying their contributions when unforeseen delays occurred in completing the project. I have been delighted to have been able to assemble such a distinguished group of authors. I am especially pleased to acknowledge the support of the staff of Cambridge University Press, particularly Richard Barling and Jocelyn Foster. I would also like to thank Mr John Wilden, who helped to formulate the plan of the book but who, unfortunately, was unable to continue to work on the project through to its completion. No book, of course, is ever completely up to date, and there is always something missing, however hard authors and editors strive to ensure that it is not. I hope, nonetheless, that readers will recognise the value of the reviews contained in this volume.

I record, with deep sadness, the untimely deaths of two contributors, Dr Anthony Hopkins and Mr Bernard Williams, during the preparation of this book. Bernard Williams' death occurred before his contribution was complete.

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