

BOOK REVIEW

EARLY MARKERS IN PARKINSON'S AND ALZHEIMER'S DISEASES

New Vistas in Drug Research, Volume 1

Eds. P. Dostert, P. Riederer, M.S. Benedetti and R. Roncucci
Springer Verlag, Vienna and New York, 310pp., 1990.

This attractively-presented book represents the proceedings of a meeting held to discuss potential early biomarkers of Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases. Diagnosis of Parkinson's disease is usually by clinical examination, but the recent development of improved therapies (especially monoamine oxidase B inhibitors) means that it should be beneficial to detect and treat the disease in its very early stages. Experts in the relevant areas discuss the value of measuring behavioural changes, PET scanning, MR imaging of putamenal iron, motor performance tests, and measurement of biochemical parameters such as dopamine neurone antibody, dopamine- β -hydroxylase, β -2-microglobulin or urinary excretion of dopamine sulphates and salsolinol. A particularly-valuable part of the book is the record of the roundtable discussion on Parkinson's disease.

Currently there are no definitive early markers in Alzheimer's disease and the need for them may be less urgent, in view of the lack of proven therapies. The fact that Alzheimer's disease is hard to define clinically certainly does not help. Nevertheless, this book provides an excellent summary of the work being carried out. Among the topics covered are epidemiology, changes in platelet membrane fluidity, the relation of Alzheimer's disease to Down's Syndrome and the use of PET, SPECT, and NMR scanning and measurement of auditory evoked potentials in diagnosis. Biochemical parameters such as changes in choline metabolism, A68 protein, measurement of the astrocyte isoenzyme of creatine kinase (CK-BB), rises in monoamine oxidase B, and alterations of glucose metabolism are all thoroughly discussed. Again, the section on Alzheimer's disease ends with a useful roundtable discussion.

Overall this is a nicely-presented and useful book which lives up to its title, and can be recommended.

Barry Halliwell
Pulmonary Medicine
U.C. Davis Medical Center