

BOOK REVIEW

A B C OF BRAIN STEM DEATH

By Christopher Pallis, Articles from the British
Medical Journal, Devenshire Press, 1983.

The book is one of a series of articles for the BMJ in the "ABC" format that concentrates on the more practical aspects of diagnosing brain stem death which serves to avoid the longstanding fear of premature burial or mistaken diagnosis of death on one hand, and offer an answer to the critical question elaborated with organ donation in the transplantation operation on the other hand.

This article declared three objectives: firstly, to emphasise that it is legitimate to equate brain death with death (and this is now widely accepted in medical and legal circles throughout the world); secondly, to suggest that the necessary and sufficient component of brain death is death of brain stem (this is less widely accepted, largely because it is a relatively new concept); and, thirdly, to realise that a dead brain stem can reliably be diagnosed at the bedside. The acceptance of these ideas would lessen human distress and lead to more rational use of our limited intensive care facilities.

The book is composed of 9 chapters in 33 pages. In its first chapter, the concept of human death is proposed. Chapter 2 explores the difference between functional death of the organism as a whole, and total cellular death of the whole organism. Chapters from 3 to 6 show systematic approaches for diagnosis of brain stem death that specify preconditions and exclusions, and confirm the absence of brain stem functions. Pitfalls and safeguards in this respect, and issues for declaration of death were described. Chapter 7 gives the prognostic value of clinical signs of brain stem death. The position in different countries and the argument about the relevance of B.E.G. in establishing the presence of a dead brain stem were discussed in chapters 8 and 9.

The book prepared the way for better insight into all these matters as well as better understanding of the social, cultural, ethical, religious, and economic implications of the subject. The presented tables and figures provided great help in clearing the theoretical

view. The author's opinions in this aspect are cited both from his extensive clinical experience and review of the current status. His dealing with all present data was in a justifiable way that led to an evaluation of the views concerning the topic.

If we accept the concept of brain stem death, it might be wise to change the words we use and no longer speak of "brain death" when what we mean is brain stem death. It is to be noted that even the concept of brain death is not medically or legally recognised in any Islamic country, and so we must evolve a concept of death which is in keeping with the cultural context of our age and to have an applicable law to identify this particular state and to formulate the relevant criteria that suit our culture. While the public in our societies considers death with the departure of the soul from the body, and our meticulous scientists identify death when every enzyme has stopped working in every cell of the body, it is difficult to talk about "the end point" of existence like in a chemical titration, and acceptance of the provided criteria in this book would be an achievable demand.

This book is recommended as a necessity for every medical practitioner, even the beginners in medicine, and it might be true reference of choice for the subject in every medical library. It is also recommended to all who can find interest in the relation between man and life. If it would be translated into arabic in a simplified way, it might face the need of the public and society through its laws.

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THESIS REVIEW PSYCHIATRIC ASPECTS OF SMOKING

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Medicine & Neurology-Ain-Shams Faculty of Medicine,
Supervised by: Prof. — A. Okasha, Prof. — A. Sadek,
and Dr. Afaf H. Khalil, 1985.

Review of literature on the subject illustrated that history of tobacco smoking dates since its discovery in 1556, and its use by American Indians. The biochemical studies of tobacco smoking showed the difference in composition of main stream smoke and side stream one. These studies demonstrated the absorption of nicotine from the different types of tobacco (e.g.), cigarette, cigar, pipe, snuff, and nicotine chewing gum, and their blood concentration profiles. Hazards of smoking either to the smokers and non-smokers (i.e. passive smokers) were presented. The pharmacological approach in the review pointed out the distribution of nicotine receptors all over the body especially in the CNS and the different pharmacological actions of nicotine and its effects on the higher psychological functions. A chapter was specified for nicotine use as drug dependence showing the criteria of addiction such as tolerance and withdrawal symptoms. The different patterns of smoking behavior (e.g. frequency of puffing, depth of inhalation, and number of cigarettes smoked), to gain the accustomed level of each smoker were also mentioned. Motivations for starting smoking were reported to be genetic and psychosocial factors, while the maintenance of smoking was detected to occur under the pharmacological and psychosocial factors. Personality of smokers with their psychoneurotic profiles was considered, associated with the different psychological explanations of smoking behavior, including the psychodynamic, behavioral, and cognitive social learning approaches.

The present review included two types of prevention of smoking, first is the primary line suggesting the role of public health services, medical staff, government role in promotion and taxation of tobacco sales, and production of low tar and nicotine cigarettes, and second is the secondary line of prevention establishing the