

Diseases of the Nervous System in Childhood (1992)

All too often, children are examined but not looked at.

Jean Aicardi

In 1989 Dr Martin Bax commissioned Professor Jean Aicardi to write a definitive book on epilepsy for the *Clinics in Developmental Medicine* series, to be published by the Mac Keith Press.

Professor Aicardi, a French paediatric neurologist and epileptologist, wanted the scope of the book to be much wider. He said his aim was to produce '... a sufficiently comprehensive description of neurological diseases of children to permit diagnostic orientation, prognosis and management, and to give access to a selection of references for further, more detailed, information ...' The book on *Diseases of the Nervous System in Childhood* would be resolutely clinically oriented, written specifically for physicians.

In the Foreword, Professor Charles Barlow of the Harvard Medical School wrote:

The timing of this text is altogether right. It comes at a culmination of the major advances of the 1980s, and the presentations are conceived in the context of the diagnostic power of CT and MRI, the clinical application of genetics as well as the promise of basic sciences in this highly relevant field ...

The book was published to great acclaim by Blackwell Scientific Publications Ltd (for MKP) as No. 115/118 of the *CDM* series, with major contributions from Martin Bax (UK), Christopher Gillberg (Sweden), and H el ene Ogier (France).

Mac Keith Press's investment in this book was far greater than in any of its previous titles and there was a great sigh of relief when Isabelle Rapin's positive review in the *New England Journal of Medicine* came into the office. Professor Rapin, a fellow of the American Academy of Neurology, described *Diseases of the Nervous System in Childhood* as:

... a user-friendly reference book that belongs on the shelf of child and adult neurologists, paediatricians, neurosurgeons, and general practitioners who need authoritative and complete information about the common and rare neurologic disorders they are bound to encounter.

From then on, 'Aicardi' (as it was called) moved from being MKP's greatest risk to being its mainstay.

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Diseases of the Nervous System in Childhood, 2nd Edition (1998)

... books are more friendly companions than computers and more easily accessible, even at the bedside.

Jean Aicardi

Six years on from its original publication, the book was revised and expanded, and reformatted to a larger page size. With the ongoing expansion of Internet technology, Professor Aicardi defended the idea of publishing in the printed format, arguing against the notion that only computers could hope to store and update the vast quantity of information available:

... books may be of some help in soliciting the most important data and giving an idea of their organization and significance ...

A phenomenon on its own, *Diseases of the Nervous System in Childhood* was published as an unnumbered title in the *CDM* series. Though the overall outline of the preceding edition was maintained, the generous format of the 2nd Edition included significantly more and larger illustrations, which included colour plates.

The Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine noted in its review that:

This text is an excellent investment for any paediatric department as a bench book: trainees will rely on it for postgraduate examinations and many physicians in general and neurological practice of children and adults will covet the copy that is now at my right hand.

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Diseases of the Nervous System in Childhood, 3rd Edition (2009)

One's last task is to communicate and discuss our, sometimes complex, findings with the patient and the family.

Jean Aicardi

Taking the book into the 21st century, Martin Bax and Christopher Gillberg acted as co-editors. Because of the vast amount of new information available, the expanded edition contained chapters written by a variety of international experts in their fields. Linda de Vries took on the chapter dedicated to neurological diseases in the perinatal period, while Robert Ouvrier contributed to disorders of the peripheral nerves. Alexis Arzimanoglou, a protégé and then colleague of Aicardi, contributed to the book for the first time, co-authoring the seminal chapter on epilepsy and other seizure disorders.

In his Introduction, Aicardi emphasized that:

Clinical medicine is and must remain an intellectual process whereby all sources of information, whether clinical *stricto sensu* or arising from technical aids, are used to formulate a diagnosis that will lead to the best possible care of the patient.

Upon its release, the latest edition (published for the first time as an E-book as well as in hardback, with individual subsections available online) received yet more accolades:

... this new edition is well worth the price in its comprehensive and in-depth review of all subjects likely to be encountered by the child neurologist ... it is vastly superior as a first-line resource over anything else.

Journal of Child Neurology

The text is very readable and offers a broad range of information with a vast bibliography.

Journal of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics

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Aicardi's Diseases of the Nervous System in Childhood, 4th Edition
(2018)

His wish was for the book to remain 'resolutely clinical'.

Alexis Arzimanoglou

With the death of Jean Aicardi in 2015, work on the eponymous 4th Edition was taken up by Alexis Arzimanoglou as Editor, with assistance from Anne O'Hare, Michael V Johnston, and Robert Ouvrier. Authors were free either to update their chapters or completely rewrite them. The only requirement was that they acknowledge the primary importance of the phenotypic spectrum of these disorders, and the indispensability of both family history-taking and clinical and physical examination.

A chapter on fetal neurology was reinstated and movement disorders were organized into a dedicated section reflecting the enormous advances occurring in the field. There was a new chapter on psychogenic neurological disorders written by Paddy Grattan-Smith. Arzimanoglou hoped that the book would be useful to a more global audience, its content relevant in both high-income and resource-poor countries.

The much-anticipated 4th Edition was published in August 2018. It is once again available in a print edition and E-book.

Writing about the book in October 2018 (*Epileptic Disord.* 2018;20(6):563-564), Ishaq Abu-Arafeh of the Royal Hospital for Children, Glasgow, said:

Jean Aicardi is a name synonymous with modern child neurology. Single-handedly, he wrote the first edition of the book, which bears his name and was published in 1992. The 4th Edition, 26 years later, is edited by four eminent child neurologists and written by 47 authors. Recent advancement in areas of neuroimaging, molecular biology and molecular genetics have unravelled many of the mysteries that challenged paediatric neurologists over the years leading to a better understanding of many disease processes, but also bringing with them new challenges and higher expectations... *Aicardi's Diseases of the Nervous System in Childhood* is a valuable resource and a reference book to practicing child neurologists, trainees and all physicians looking after children in acute hospital setting, in office practice or managing children with chronic neurodisabilities. It will, undoubtedly, make its way to the desks, computers and laptops of many paediatric neurologists.

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