Media and Book Reviews

NEUROBIOLOGY OF THE PARENTAL BRAIN, FIRST EDITION, e-BOOK

edited by R. Bridges, 584 pp., Elsevier Inc., 2008

At first glance, *Neurobiology of the Parental Brain*, edited by Robert S. Bridges, seems to be a textbook from which many students of neurology—ranging from medical students on up to clinical neurologists—could benefit. A quick look on the back cover reveals a range of topics that the book covers, including postpartum depression, maternal anxiety, and imaging the parental brain. After that first glance at the back cover, a closer look at the text reveals that in practice, this book may have a much narrower audience than originally anticipated. Of the book's 34 chapters, 23 focus virtually exclusively on animal research. Another chapter includes a mathematical model for the roles of oxytocin and dopamine on mating-induced secretion of the hormone prolactin. For the neurologist interested in delving deeper into the broad topic of the neurobiology of being a parent, these chapters may offer many insights: the text includes information on parenting in the prairie vole, the family unit of marmoset monkeys, the effects of hormones on rat mothers and babies, and the differential equations used to model the effects of dopamine and oxytocin on prolactin rhythm. However, for those looking to simply gain some basic knowledge on the neurologic basis of being a (human) mother or father, these 2 dozen chapters will likely be judged as too specialized to offer high-yield information, and will likely be skimmed or skipped entirely.

For most neurologists, the areas of interest are more likely to be those chapters that discuss the various aspects of neurobiology as they relate to human parents. Within these chapters, topics include the mother-infant touch, neuroimaging of the parental brain, postpartum depression and anxiety, drug abuse and parenting, and the role of the father in human parenting. Unfortunately, even within these chapters, there are clear

deficits. For example, a chapter that may be of especial interest to neurologists is chapter 6: "Imaging the Parental Brain." However, within the dozen-plus pages of the chapter, there was not a single actual image of the parental brain; instead, the contributors chose to include 2 tables that summarize multiple studies done on parental brains. Although these tables are certainly informative and provide a concise synthesis of much information, the lack of a single example of an imaging study seems to be a glaring—and surprising—omission.

One chapter deserves positive mention. In this reviewer's opinion, the chapter that focused exclusively on postpartum depression in mothers (chapter 12) was one of the best and most clinically informative for a general neurology audience. The chapter is divided into 2 parts: in part I, the disorder itself is discussed in great detail. The authors highlight the need for better diagnosis of this disorder and go on to explain the range of disorders that fall under the postpartum mood disorder "umbrella," how to screen for these disorders, and treatment strategies that are available. The contributors to this chapter then transition to part II: the neurobiological basis for postpartum depression. A summary of CNS studies, imaging, and diagrams are useful aids in better understanding this potentially devastating disorder.

In conclusion, Bridges' text is probably not going to be the textbook of choice for the general neurologist or trainee. However, for those neurologists interested in making the translational research leap from animal to human, *Neurobiology of the Parental Brain* touches on many important topics in the world of animal research on parenting and delves into these topics in fairly great depth.

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Disclosure: Dr. Goldenholz has served as medical writer for WellnessFX.com, Sharecare.com, and Demand Studios livestrong.com.
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Neurology®

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Neurology 2012;79:e209

DOI 10.1212/WNL.0b013e318278b6d7

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