

**A Clinical Manual of Adverse Drug Reactions.** *S. James Matthews, Fred Schneeweiss, and Robert J. Cersosimo.* *Appleton-Century-Crofts, Norwalk, Connecticut, 1986, 666 pp., \$26.95.*

This book is the 10th in a series of pocket-sized clinical manuals produced by this publisher. The authors are from the College of Pharmacy and Allied Health Professions at Northeastern University in Boston. As a general comment, I have found in the past that most of these pocket manuals lose some of their usefulness and appropriateness once one leaves the confines of a residency program.

In this instance, however, I found this manual of adverse drug reactions to be quite helpful in day-to-day family practice. In this age of polypharmacy, and in my own particular practice, which includes many older patients with chronic diseases, the complexity of prescribing medications is increasing. A sound knowledge of the potential damage done by physicians' prescribing practices is of prime importance.

This book is laid out in a very simple format. Individual drugs are listed generically and, in some cases, by drug class such as, for example, oral contraceptives. The authors have included 160 drugs or drug classes arranged alphabetically with a cross-reference to the trade names in the index. Under each section there is an initial paragraph giving a general description of the drug, when it was introduced into practice, and a general statement regarding its overall toxicity. The drug is then discussed, system by system, into the most common reported side effects. This format makes the manual easy to use in a clinical setting, where one may be presented with, for example, a potential gastrointestinal side effect. By simply referring to that system reference for that particular drug, one can rapidly assess whether what one is seeing in

the office is potentially a drug reaction.

The authors acknowledge the difficulty of staying current in such a manual, and I am sure that there will be revisions and additions over time.

My only objection was that there was not sufficient reference to drug interactions. Commonly occurring interactions were highlighted in bold-face type where appropriate, but there may have been room for a table of common and significant drug interactions as an appendix.

I would recommend this book as an inexpensive addition to the office library that would be useful on a day-to-day basis.

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**Vaccination Certificate Requirements and Health Advice for International Travel.** *World Health Organization, Geneva, Switzerland, 1986, 84 pp., (price not available).*

In spite of all the threats of violence occurring worldwide and hostage crises, Americans live in a highly mobile society. Even in the most remote areas, physicians are likely to have among their patients those who travel extensively in this troubled but fascinating world. How to prepare patients to participate in this mobile society is frequently a problem.

Most solutions to current problems are lengthy and even long-winded. Here is a booklet of only 84 pages, packed with information about the health hazards in most parts of the world. Is my patient proposing to travel to an area where chloroquine-resistant malaria is found? Here is the answer to this problem and to many other similar ones.

Fortunately, the need for international certificates has been much reduced since the eradication of smallpox. The list of vaccination certificate

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requirements and the principal diseases that are endemic in important areas of the world are listed. There is a valuable appendix, listing major food-borne or water-borne diseases, explaining their mode of transmission and their geographical occurrence.

This little book is a must for any physician who wishes to advise travelers and would-be travelers effectively.

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**Handbook of Endocrine Tests in Children.** *I. A. Hughes. PSG Publishing, Littleton, Massachusetts, 154 pp., \$16.50 (paper).*

The expressed purpose of this handbook is to provide a guide to clinicians in obtaining and interpreting standard endocrine tests. The first chapter covers general principles of endocrine tests, and provides information on preparation of the child prior to sampling, the collection of specimens of blood, urine, and saliva, proper labeling, and other practical points to help prevent costly errors that would invalidate results or require procedures to be repeated.

The subsequent chapters are organized by endocrine systems and list the standard tests with a step-by-step protocol for the procedure and a brief discussion of interpretation of the results. In many cases flow-chart diagrams review normal endocrine function and interaction. As an additional tool, the end of each chapter contains a selection of representative case histories as examples. Also included is a list of standard abbreviations and an appendix of normal values.

The book is published in England and some of the pharmacology discussion refers to the British names of various agents; a list of the American counterpart would be a helpful addition.

The author is successful in providing a clear "cookbook" approach to the performance of endocrine tests. To a large degree, it is assumed that

the practitioner knows already which tests to select and the discussion begins at that point. From a practical standpoint, a frequent area of uncertainty is in deciding which or how many tests are indicated in a specific situation, and more guidance in this direction would be useful.

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**Manual of Cardiac Arrhythmias.** *Edward K. Chung. Yorke Medical Books, New York, 1986, 307 pp., \$30.00.*

This hardcover manual by a noted cardiologist is designed to be "clinical, concise and practical" and useful in "the daily care of patients." The manual certainly fulfills this goal. The introduction includes the clinical significance, etiology, incidence, and classifications of arrhythmias. Chapter 3 provides an excellent diagnostic approach to cardiac arrhythmias.

The majority of the manual addresses specific groups of arrhythmias in a logical and understandable manner. Each rhythm is accurately described, and this description is followed by precise diagnostic criteria. The author then details the clinical significance of each of the arrhythmias.

The final third of the book deals with therapy of arrhythmias, and includes two chapters on digitalis. The chapter on antiarrhythmic drug therapy contains a well-organized and concise description of each agent, indications for its use, administration techniques, and side effects and toxicity. The book also contains a table on antitachyarrhythmic agents, which includes dosage, onset of action, time of maximum effect, duration of action, indications for the use of each agent, and adverse effects and toxicity. There is a similar table for anti-bradycardia arrhythmic agents as well as a table on the effect of cardiac drugs on conduction time. There are also chapters on artificial cardiac pacing, direct current shock, and cardiopulmonary resuscitation.

The book uses many common abbreviations, all of which are listed in

the front of the book. Initially, referring to the abbreviations list can be a bit confusing, but as one continues to read and study the manual, this format becomes less of a problem.

I believe this outstanding manual of cardiac arrhythmias meets the purposes outlined in the preface. This book will be of great value to any family physician who deals with cardiac patients, emergency room physicians, residents, medical students, and coronary care nurses. The precise description of the arrhythmias and their pathophysiology make this book particularly attractive, not only for understanding arrhythmias, but as a reference manual for therapy.

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**Infections in Current Medical Practice.** *Daniel Reid, Norman R. Grist, Ian W. Pinkerton (eds). Butterworths, Stoneham, Massachusetts, and London, 1986, 140 pp., \$45.00.*

This paperback selection briefly considers the broad spectrum of infectious diseases with a perspective that presents a general review for the student of medicine in training as well as the practitioner who desires a refreshing of fundamentals in this area.

Although well written, concise, and generously illustrated, there is no intent to present exhaustive coverage of all clinical aspects of infectious diseases. Rather, the authors present a selected review in such examples as influenza, infections of travelers, childhood infections, common ambulatory infections, and the acquired immune deficiency syndrome. Each review footnotes the latest information on epidemiology, virology or bacteriology, symptoms, complications, diagnosis, treatment, and prevention. Diagrams, radiographs, and illustrations are both plentiful and to the point. Treatment protocols are left in general terms largely because of the ever-changing modalities in force. An excellent appendix covers immunization schedules as well as antimicrobial dosage (including some third-generation cephalosporins).

The text could best be imple-



mented as a resource for ready review of outpatient infections encountered by the generalist in practice. It offers more than does a pure infectious disease manual in that each area addressed has been adequately developed to provide sufficient background considerations. It offers less than does a manual in that this text does not readily lend itself to a "cookbook" approach to infections and antibiotic dosage as preferred by some clinicians.

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**Nutrition for Family and Primary Care Practitioners.** *Anita B. Lasswell, Daphne A. Rowe, Louis Hochheiser. George F. Stickley Company, Philadelphia, 1986, 311 pp., \$29.00 (paper).*

The authors of this book should be commended for attempting to focus on nutritional issues specific to primary care. Certain sections of this book are particularly relevant to family practice, or more specifically to the implementation of nutrition in family practice. The organization is fairly

standard for a nutrition text, proceeding from composition, functions, and requirements of foods and nutrients to nutritional assessment, nutrition in the life cycle, and specific nutrition-related disease. Where this book is more valuable to the family physician is in its inclusion of the chapters "Nutritional Responsibilities of the Health Care Team," "Community Nutrition Services," and the inclusion in the appendices of a review of nutrition education materials for office practice and nutrition software programs.

Unfortunately, the readability and utility of this book are somewhat compromised by its organization. The authors intended that illustrations, graphs, and tables would serve as a quick reference for busy practitioners, but much better resources are available for this purpose. The tables in this book are often difficult to comprehend and are so intermixed with the text that they are somewhat difficult to reference. There are also some remarkable printing errors. While the case studies in this book emphasize practical aspects of nutritional practice, the organization of the case studies is uneven.

Perhaps the best audience for this book is a practicing physician who is just considering ways to implement nutrition in practice. It touches on most of the major problems of implementation; it is unfortunate that it does not go deeper into specifics on how to overcome the time and budget constraints of using nutritional practice in primary care.

In summary, this book is not the best material available as a quick reference for the busy family physician, primarily because of its organization. Nor is it useful as an encyclopedic-type reference for in-depth understanding of nutritional problems. It also neglects to highlight the excitement of future possibilities of using nutrition in primary care. It is an attempt, however, to be specific for family practice, and in this respect succeeds in raising important issues and providing some valuable practical material.

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