

# Reviews of Books and Software

*HIV Infection, A Clinical Manual*, (2nd Edition). Howard Lidman, Robert Witzburg (eds). Little, Brown & Co, Boston, Mass, 1993, 555 pp, \$32.50. ISBN 0-316-51162-5.

The explosion of medical data on HIV infection has prompted a variety of manuals to assist the clinician in dealing with patients who present with manifestations of this disease. One attempt at this is *HIV Infection, A Clinical Manual*, the first edition of which was published in 1990. This 555-page manual grew out of a series of loose-leaf publications for the house officers and staff at the medicine department at Boston City Hospital. The 2nd edition, which is reviewed here, is an entirely new and updated text. In addition to the editors, there are 49 contributing authors from various fields of medicine. It is intended to support physicians, nurses, and other health care professionals. The only two similar textbooks currently available are DeVita's *AIDS: Etiology, Diagnosis, Treatment and Prevention* (572 pages) and *The Medical Management of AIDS* (503 pages).

I believe one of the strongest aspects of this book is its organization into four sections: Overview of HIV Infections, Clinical Syndromes, Opportunistic Diseases, and the most interesting, Special Topics. The 37 chapters are written almost entirely by the contributing authors. Little of the material is repeated, no minor achievement, given its 555 pages. However, when items are covered in two sections, there is no cross-reference or discussion in the previous or following section. There are 16 color plates, which provide an excellent display of oral, ocular, and dermatologic findings of HIV. These plates are not intended to be all inclusive, as is *A Colour Atlas of AIDS*, published in 1986 by Wolfe Medical Publications. The tables in the text are excellent, and for the most part, the black-and-white figures are adequate, except for Figure 1-1, which is dated December 1991 and is clearly an outdated statistical figure. Another strong point is the number of references for each chapter, numbering in the 20s to 30s. I particularly enjoyed the psychology chapter. I also found the chapter on fever to be an excellent overview of this problem in persons with HIV.

The neurology chapter has an interesting passage on the diagnostic approach to meningoenephalitis, but in the rest of

the manual, these diagnostic approaches are notably absent. The chapter on anti-retroviral therapy is up to date and conclusive, given the data available in early 1993. Noticeably absent is a side effect of zidovudine (Retrovir), which can cause a bluish discoloration of the nail beds.

The Special Topics section includes interesting chapters on the homosexual or bisexual patient, the drug-using patient, HIV infection in women, HIV infection in ethnic communities, and legal issues regarding HIV infection. I found the chapter on ambulatory management of HIV infection to be excellent.

What is disheartening about Lidman and Witzburg's excellent textbook is the absence of family physicians. The book does not integrate primary care family physicians into the text, and none of the contributing authors is a family physician despite the clear move in medicine to mainstream the care of HIV patients to the primary care physician. Notwithstanding, the book is an excellent addition to the armamentarium for physicians who care for patients with HIV infection on a regular or infrequent basis.

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## Software Reviews

Gary N. Fox, MD, Section Editor

ELECTRONIC DRUG REFERENCE, Version 6.02 (1993). Clinical Reference Systems, 7100 E Belleview Ave, Suite 305, Greenwood Village, CO 80111-1636 (800-237-8401). \$695.

DOCUMENTATION: 50-page, spiral-bound, illustrated manual.

HOW SUPPLIED: Multiple 720K (3.5-in.) or 5.25-in. diskettes.

MINIMUM HARDWARE REQUIREMENTS: IBM PC-XT or compatible with 4MB hard disk space, 256K RAM, DOS 2.0.

MOUSE SUPPORT: Yes.

TOLL-FREE CUSTOMER SUPPORT: Yes. 1-800-237-8401.

DEMONSTRATION DISKS: Yes.

MONEY-BACK GUARANTEE: 30-day.

RATING: Good.

As our pharmaceutical armamentarium has increased, it has become increasingly difficult to memorize all the information needed and increasingly time-consuming to look it up in multikilogram tomes.

Well-designed electronic systems can retrieve such information in seconds. *Electronic Drug Reference (EDR)* is a program whose promise is to provide "the health care professional with access to essential information on thousands of prescribed drugs." Our first review of this product was performed before widespread use of graphical user interfaces (Windows) and pointing devices (mice). Although still a DOS program, mouse support and other refinements have been added, so we are re-reviewing it.

*EDR* loads onto hard disk by means of an easy-to-use installation program. It occupies 3.99MB of disk space. A Windows icon is included.

*EDR* is a drug database. Access to drug information is initiated from an alphabetic drug index or an indications index, accessed either by keyboard or a few mouse clicks. Users may add information, accessible through a separate user index; *EDR*'s original material is not modifiable. *EDR* is text-based.

For each medication, information is available in major categories. The categories are indications; pharmacokinetics; warnings, contraindications, and precautions; drug interactions; adverse reactions; and trade products, administration, and dosage. When in one section, a single key press of a significant letter (eg, d for drug interactions) switches to the newly selected section. Failing to optimize the point-and-click environment, *EDR* forces users to travel back through screen-clearing menus to accomplish the same task with the mouse.

Starting with a "C" prompt, it took about 20 seconds on my 486/25 laptop to access all needed prescribing information. Using labetalol as an illustration, invoking the program produces *EDR*'s main menu. One key press produces the alphabetic index; typing "lab" provides direct access to that section of the alphabet. Either cursing to "labetalol, oral" and pressing Enter, or pointing to it and single clicking produces the "trade products" section. This section contains the drug's pregnancy category, indications, initial dosage, recommended titration interval and schedule, usual dosage, and maximum dosage, all listed on two, airy, easy-to-read screens. Pressing "L" (keyboard or click on the screen instruction) produces a list of dosage strengths available (including which strength tablets are scored), completing the necessary pre-

# YOCON<sup>®</sup>

## Yohimbine HCl

**Description:** Yohimbine is a 3a-15a-20B-17a-hydroxy Yohimbine-16a-carboxylic acid methyl ester. The alkaloid is found in Rubiaceae and related trees. Also in Rauwolfia Serpentina (L) Benth. Yohimbine is an indolalkylamine alkaloid with chemical similarity to reserpine. It is a crystalline powder, odorless. Each compressed tablet contains (1/12 gr.) 5.4 mg of Yohimbine Hydrochloride.

**Action:** Yohimbine blocks presynaptic alpha-2 adrenergic receptors. Its action on peripheral blood vessels resembles that of reserpine, though it is weaker and of short duration. Yohimbine's peripheral autonomic nervous system effect is to increase parasympathetic (cholinergic) and decrease sympathetic (adrenergic) activity. It is to be noted that in male sexual performance, erection is linked to cholinergic activity and to alpha-2 adrenergic blockade which may theoretically result in increased penile inflow, decreased penile outflow or both.

Yohimbine exerts a stimulating action on the mood and may increase anxiety. Such actions have not been adequately studied or related to dosage although they appear to require high doses of the drug. Yohimbine has a mild anti-diuretic action, probably via stimulation of hypothalamic centers and release of posterior pituitary hormone.

Reportedly, Yohimbine exerts no significant influence on cardiac stimulation and other effects mediated by B-adrenergic receptors, its effect on blood pressure, if any, would be to lower it; however no adequate studies are at hand to quantitate this effect in terms of Yohimbine dosage.

**Indications:** Yocon<sup>®</sup> is indicated as a sympatholytic and mydriatic. It may have activity as an aphrodisiac.

**Contraindications:** Renal diseases, and patient's sensitive to the drug. In view of the limited and inadequate information at hand, no precise tabulation can be offered of additional contraindications.

**Warning:** Generally, this drug is not proposed for use in females and certainly must not be used during pregnancy. Neither is this drug proposed for use in pediatric, geriatric or cardio-renal patients with gastric or duodenal ulcer history. Nor should it be used in conjunction with mood-modifying drugs such as antidepressants, or in psychiatric patients in general.

**Adverse Reactions:** Yohimbine readily penetrates the CNS and produces a complex pattern of responses in lower doses than required to produce peripheral a-adrenergic blockade. These include, anti-diuresis, a general picture of central excitation including elevation of blood pressure and heart rate, increased motor activity, irritability and tremor. Sweating, nausea and vomiting are common after parenteral administration of the drug.<sup>1-3</sup> Also dizziness, headache, skin flushing reported when used orally.<sup>1-3</sup>

**Dosage and Administration:** Experimental dosage reported in treatment of erectile impotence.<sup>1-3</sup> 1 tablet (5.4 mg) 3 times a day, to adult males taken orally. Occasional side effects reported with this dosage are nausea, dizziness or nervousness. In the event of side effects dosage to be reduced to 1/2 tablet 3 times a day, followed by gradual increases to 1 tablet 3 times a day. Reported therapy not more than 10 weeks.<sup>3</sup>

**How Supplied:** Oral tablets of YOCON<sup>®</sup> 1/12 gr. 5.4mg in bottles of 100's NDC 53159-001-01, 1000's NDC 53159-001-10 and Blister-Paks of 30's NDC 53159-001-30

#### References:

1. A. Morales et al., New England Journal of Medicine: 1981, November 12, 1981.
2. Goodman, Gilman — The Pharmacological basis of Therapeutics 6th ed., p. 176-188. McMillan December Rev. 1/85.
3. Weekly Urological Clinical letter, 27-2, July 4, 1983.
4. A. Morales et al., The Journal of Urology 128: 45-47, 1982.



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## Book Reviews

scribing information. For mouse users, the screen has a vertical scroll bar on the right. On the bottom of the screen is a mouse-sensitive menu bar that also lists the corresponding function keys for keyboard users. This menu contains only main functions, such as the major indices and exiting.

Several of *EDR's* features could be improved. Inexplicably, the listing of available formulations may be accessed only through the trade products section, often making it a couple of keystrokes away. For drugs within classes, sometimes the user's choice must be reselected from the class list. No charts or tables of comparative data for drugs within classes are available. *EDR* should have a pointer-sensitive menu, either a pull-down or a bar, that permits switches among categories of drug information (including the formulation listing). The patient information is mapped to class. Amoxicillin maps to "Penicillins, oral," a handout that states these drugs should not be taken with food. This advice is incorrect for amoxicillin (and not user modifiable). In the era of menu-driven programs, *EDR's* provisions for users' additions is antediluvian. Although each drug's interactions are listed, there is no capability to check multiple drug interactions.

These minor flaws should not dissuade potential purchasers, although the price, compared with that of competing products, may. Generally, keystrokes are minimized, and *EDR* provides useful information in a logical format. Information may be printed, including customized multiline headers and footers, which are especially useful for patient handouts.

Competitive products include *AskRx* in the Windows world, which was reviewed in the June issue of *The Journal of Family Practice*, and *Physicians' GenRx 1994*, which is reviewed in this issue.

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**PHYSICIANS' GENRX 1994.** Cardinal Health Systems, Inc, Suite 150, 4600 W 77th St, Edina, MN 55435-4923 (1-800-328-0180). Single user, \$139.95; with quarterly updates, \$259.95. Site license (quarterly updates)—unlimited users on single server, \$1999.95.

**DOCUMENTATION:** Illustrated, 4-page flyer including basic information and examples.

**HOW SUPPLIED:** 3.5-in. diskettes or CD-ROM.

**MINIMUM HARDWARE REQUIREMENTS:**

Hard disk with 13.5MB, DOS 3.1 or higher, and 640K of memory. Extended memory is recommended.

**MOUSE SUPPORT:** Optional.

**TOLL-FREE CUSTOMER SUPPORT:** Yes, 1-800-328-0180.

**DEMONSTRATION DISKS:** Yes.

**MONEY-BACK GUARANTEE:** Not specified.

**RATING:** Very good (fast and useful but a little difficult to navigate).

*Physicians' GenRx for Hard Disk* is the computer version of a 2700-page drug reference published under the same name. The program is intended for the physician user. Complete prescribing information is included on all FDA-approved prescription drugs. Nonprescription drugs are not included. There is also a *Physicians' GenRx/Merck Manual* on CD-ROM. This review is of the hard-disk version.

*GenRx* begins with a main screen in a Windows format. There are three major subsections, which are reached by clicking the "Contents" button. Subsection one, "About Physicians' GenRx," provides instruction about the program. The second subsection, "Generic Name Index," allows for search by generic name. The subsection "Keyword Index" allows for search of either a topic or a drug by trade name.

The instructions walk users through three scenarios: searches using keywords, categories, and topics. Once familiar with the on-screen commands, it is relatively easy to locate drugs or clinical entities and pull up information about the drug or its relationship to the symptom. For example, in looking up a trade drug, clicking the Keyword Index provides a list of all trade drugs. Clicking the command Enter Expand allows the user to enter the name of a given drug. Simultaneously, a window displays an alphabetized list of choices, which continues to narrow the selection as each letter in the name is entered.

Once the drug is located, the user may then either click Enter Expand or double-click on the drug name. This will bring up the section on the drug in a text format with various sections, such as indications, precautions, dosing, etc, on the onscreen menu. Then the user may view the section or print either the section or all information on the drug.

A search also can be conducted by drug category. To view a list of all medicines in a certain class, such as beta blockers, simply type "beta blocker" in the space after clicking into the Keyword Index. Although "beta blocker" will not



come up, an alternative, "beta receptor blocking agents," is offered as one of the choices in the alphabetical list. The same procedures can be used to locate additional information.

Another feature of the program is the ability to do word searches and word matches. This feature can be useful in locating a particular side effect or pharmaceutical company, and in linking drugs with side effects. As with any search feature, it is literal—you may find words being linked without necessarily being related.

Other features that should be highlighted in *GenRx* are its ability to provide drug costs, generic drug evaluations, and Medicare reimbursement codes. Quarterly updates, which keep the database current, cost an additional \$120 per year. *GenRx* offers several advantages over the *Physicians' Desk Reference* and other reference books. These include speed and the ability to cross-reference generic names and prices. Additionally, the word-search ability of the program allows for selective looks at side effects, and may be used to cross-reference terms.

The downside to *GenRx* is the software's learning curve. The documentation sent with the program is fairly sparse. If one is familiar at all with computers, however, working through the scenarios in the instructions should suffice.

I believe that *GenRx* would be useful for any practice that has a personal computer with 10MB to spare. It is a quick reference, and once mastered, relatively friendly to use. If you dislike having to manually cross-reference drugs in books, *GenRx* saves time and headaches. It would also be very useful as a teaching tool in the model office for residency programs and for medical students in pharmacology.

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AMERICAN FAMILY PHYSICIAN ON CD-ROM (1992). Creative Multimedia Corporation, 514 Northwest 11th Ave, Suite

203, Portland, OR 97209 (800-854-9126). \$295 (initial purchase plus \$150 annual renewal).

DOCUMENTATION: Installation guide.

HOW SUPPLIED: CD-ROM disk.

HARDWARE REQUIREMENTS: IBM-PC compatible or Macintosh with CD-ROM; will not operate under Windows.

MOUSE SUPPORT: Yes.

TOLL-FREE CUSTOMER SUPPORT: Yes. 1-800-854-9126.

DEMONSTRATION DISKS: No.

MONEY-BACK GUARANTEE: 30-day.

Creative Multimedia Corporation (CMC) distributes CD-ROM products. CD-ROMs are computer disks that look like audio CDs. The information on these disks can be "read" by the computer, but the user cannot add or modify data on CD-ROMs. CD-ROMs are capable of holding a huge amount of data (more than 600MB).

One CD "Journal on Disk" marketed by CMC contains the full text of all issues of *American Family Physician* (*AFP on CD-ROM*) from July 1985 to December 1992. It includes color scans of all illustrations and scrollable text representations of tables. CMC markets this disk individually and in a variety of discount packages, including one with a CD-ROM drive and two other medical disks. *AFP on CD-ROM* uses the DiscPassage database retrieval engine. Several medical and nonmedical CD-ROM applications use DiscPassage, ranging from *The New England Journal of Medicine* to *Audubon's Birds of America*.

The DiscPassage software is usable but not exceptional. It runs only in MS-DOS, has a drop-down menu bar that does not support a mouse, and is picky about what sort of video card the computer contains. The illustrations reproduce poorly on a standard VGA setup; Super-VGA graphics produce far superior, newspaper-quality color images. Certain video cards befuddle DiscPassage, causing the disappointing message "Your monitor is not capable of displaying image." Usually the illustrations are

not essential to getting the needed information, such as current treatment or recommended diagnostic workups, but dermatologic photographs and radiographs are valuable in some of the articles.

Users can search for information by selecting words contained in the text of the article or by the subject matter, author's name, or title. Boolean operators "AND," "OR," and "NOT" can be used in searching. One can also browse through the tables of contents. The speed of article retrieval depends on how fast the user can type key words and the speed of both the CD-ROM drive and the PC. Using our 386-25SX with a 150K/sec CD-ROM drive, it takes an average of about 1 minute to do a search, assuming the PC is already turned on. It is much faster than finding an article using *Index Medicus* and takes about as long as finding information in a textbook.

Our family medicine residency has had *AFP on CD-ROM* for about a year. I use it to illustrate teaching points with articles I vaguely remember; to check review articles to ensure that my recommendations reflect current practice; and to resolve disputes with residents over patient management. In my faculty group practice, for approximately one in every 12 patients I need information that justifies the few minutes it takes to do the CD-ROM search. The clinical quizzes at the end of each issue can be used for continuing medical education (CME), although the convenient CME postcards found in the printed version of the *AFP* are not available with the CD-ROM version.

Teaching practices will find *AFP on CD-ROM* invaluable. Private practices that are too busy to use traditional textbooks in the course of patient care probably will be too busy to use *AFP on CD-ROM*. However, practices that have a spare minute or two between patients, a PC, and a CD-ROM drive, could easily find *AFP on CD-ROM* an attractive purchase.

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