

REVIEWS OF BOOKS

& SOFTWARE

BOOK REVIEWS

Skin Surgery: A Practical Guide.

Richard P. Usatine, Ronald L. Moy, Edward L. Tobinick, and Daniel Mark Siegel. Mosby-Year Book, St. Louis, Mo, 1998. 337 pp. ISBN: 0-81517-362-8. \$69.95.

We often buy dermatology textbooks on the basis of the quality of the color pictures, thinking that just by owning such wonderful illustrations, our skill in dermatologic diagnosis and treatment will improve. More often than not, however, these dermatology texts sit on the bookshelf, to be pulled out only when frantically searching for a picture that looks like the rash on the patient in the office. Alternatively, there are some dermatology books that have useful wording but lack quality pictures.

Skin Surgery: A Practical Guide is a valuable addition to the dermatology literature for primary care physicians, because it combines 3 qualities essential to the practice of primary care medicine. First, it is a comprehensive guide for performing multiple primary care techniques in dermatology. Second, the quality of the photographs is superb. Third, the format and layout of the material is as "primary-care friendly" as any book I have seen. This text should be welcomed by family physicians, internists, OB/GYNs, family nurse practitioners, physician assistants, residents, and medical students. The book is even suitable for use in educating patients before they undergo dermatologic procedures.

This book's primary author is a family physician, and its secondary authors are dermatologists. As a result, it is written in a very accessible and consistent style. The chapters cover the spectrum of dermatologic surgical procedures, including anesthetic techniques, hemostasis, biopsies, suturing materials and techniques, elliptical excisions, cryosurgi-

cal and electrosurgical techniques, incision and drainage of lesions, and intralesional injections.

Each chapter has step-by-step guides for performing common procedures. The procedures are illustrated with excellent full-color photographs or line figures demonstrating the salient points. These photographs are of the primary author's patients, and include before, during, and follow-up pictures. In addition, there are tips throughout the book, such as practicing a shave biopsy on an orange. The authors also discuss the pros and cons of performing different procedures, with recommendations according to the type of procedure. The discussion of hemostasis was particularly easy to follow and helpful. There are sample consent forms that can be adapted for practice and excellent wound care instruction sheets. There are also chapters on the treatment of premalignant and malignant skin lesions.

I would highly recommend this book to anyone planning to do skin surgery or currently doing it on a regular basis, including primary care physicians and dermatology physicians and residents.

Adam O. Goldstein, MD
University of North Carolina
School of Medicine
Chapel Hill

SOFTWARE REVIEW

GenRx 98.1A. Mosby-Year Book, Inc, 11830 Westline Ind Dr, St Louis, MO 63146-3318. (800) 426-4545. Web site: <http://www.mosby.com>

PRICE: Annual subscription (initial and 3 quarterly updates): \$350. Single annual update: \$175. Prices do not include shipping, handling, and applicable taxes

DOCUMENTATION: Available on the Web site

HOW SUPPLIED: CD-ROM

HARDWARE & SOFTWARE REQUIREMENTS: PC or Macintosh with CD-ROM drive, 10 MB of hard disk space

POINTING DEVICE: Required

CUSTOMER SUPPORT: (800) 426-4545

DEMO DISKS: Demonstration CD-ROM available

GUARANTEE: None specified

RATING: Very good

The list of pharmaceuticals prescribed by primary care physicians continues to broaden. With increased pharmacotherapeutic options, the complexity of patients' drug lists expands proportionately. Certain drugs are on my mental "flagged" list that consists of drugs noted for interactions. When I am adding a medication for patients whose lists include these drugs, I often feel more secure using software that provides information on drug interactions rather than relying on my memory.

Physician's Desk Reference Drug Interactions (reviewed in *J Fam Pract* 1996; 43:403-5) used to be a reasonable, literature-based program, but it recently reverted to the official product information format. I have 2 concerns about this type of format: (1) There are reported interactions that are not in the official product information; and (2) Past versions using brand names have provided disparate interactions results for different brands of the same generic substance.

So I needed to find a new program for information on drug interactions. My criteria for a program of this type included the ability to handle multiple, simultaneous drugs; reliable identification of known, significant interactions; provision of information

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FIGURE 1

Background: *GenRx's* Drug Names screen (second button on tool bar). Foreground: Drug Interaction Tool.

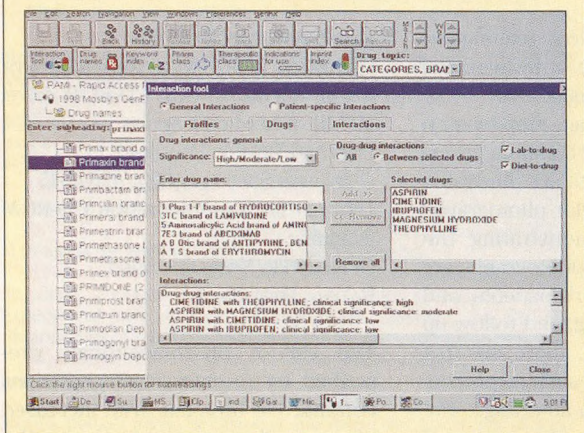
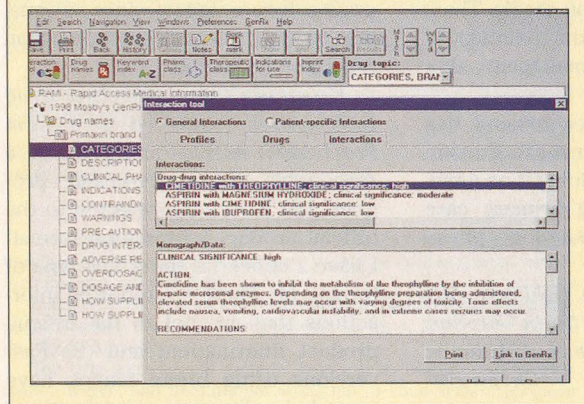


FIGURE 2

Background: Double-clicking on the highlighted "Primaxin" from Figure 1 produces a list of the monograph's topical subheadings. Foreground: Drug Interaction Tool after the Interactions tab has been clicked, allowing users to ascertain the nature of each interaction.



about the identified interactions, such as clinical significance and nature of the interactions; a reasonably fast and user-friendly interface; affordability (\$200 or less); and periodic updating. I decided to try *GenRx*.

For general drug information, I have been using the *Physician's Desk Reference (PDR)* on CD-ROM. I wondered if it would be possible to use *GenRx* to obtain drug interactions and drug information. I tested *GenRx's* drug information capabilities using 4 clinical ques-

tions. In each situation, the necessary drug information that could be obtained from the *PDR* CD-ROM was not available on *GenRx*.

The real reason I purchased *GenRx*, however, was for its drug interactions utility. The drug interactions tool is easy to use. For this utility, the user clicks the first icon on the tool bar, which is the Interaction Tool (Figure 1). The user then has the option to click the Profiles tab and enter a profile consisting of the patient's name, sex, date of birth, and drug allergies. Once entered, this information is stored and can be selected from the patient profile list in the future. The main function of the patient profile is to offer allergy/cross-sensitivity alerts when interaction checking is performed.

My main use of an interactions program, however, is in checking drug-drug interactions. In Figure 1, the Interaction Tool icon has been clicked, bringing up the Drugs tab screen. Several drugs, seen on the right side of the active window, have been entered into the "Selected drugs" box through the "Enter drug name" window to its left. Through a drop-down box, users can select interactions of high, high/moderate, or high/moderate/low significance. Users can elect to see all interac-

tions, producing a list of all drugs in the database interacting with each entered drug. This option seems most useful when dealing with one drug, such as a less familiar medication prescribed by a consultant. *GenRx* also includes lab-to-drug interactions and diet-to-drug interactions, but users can click boxes to disable this feature.

To obtain more specific information about the identified interactions, the user clicks on the Interactions tab to the right of the Drugs tab. This produces the view of the interactions seen in Figure 2. Drug-drug interactions are listed first, then diet-drug interactions and lab-drug interactions. The diet-drug interaction report includes such subsections as nutrient effects, food interactions, lactation information, and alcohol interactions. The program allows printing of the monograph data either for the entire interactions list or for the selected interaction only. Unfortunately, it is not possible to print the interactions list summary from the top window of the Interaction Tool. There are no preference settings in Interaction Tool; each re-entry defaults to all drug-drug interactions (rather than those between selected drugs), with lab-drug interactions and diet-drug interactions included. Users cannot set *GenRx* to automatically boot to the Interaction Tool or any other desired feature. All features worked smoothly and swiftly on a Pentium 133 mHz laptop computer with a 12X CD-ROM drive.

Gary N. Fox, MD
Toledo, Ohio