

## Book Reviews

**Conn's Current Therapy 1998: Latest Approved Methods for the Practicing Physician.** Edited by Robert E. Rakel. 1360 pp, illustrated. Philadelphia, WB Saunders Company, 1998. \$59. ISBN: 0-7216-7223-X.

One has only to note that this edition is the 98th to get a feeling for its persistent popularity. One reason for its success is that within this edition the very latest clinical treatment recommendations are readily available to the clinician. Even in a busy practice setting the physician can quickly peruse the basic causes and diagnostic considerations pertinent to a patient's immediate problem, then move right into the treatment aspects, which represent the book's main emphasis. The highlighted treatment sections offer a comprehensive discussion of the most recently reviewed therapeutic standards and options. Medication dosages are provided, and non-pharmacologic treatment pathways are described.

Each of the 300 chapters is contributed by a selected academic authority on the condition being addressed. Authors of 16 chapters are from those countries outside the United States where a particular condition is more commonly found. Dr. Rakel's goal is to include clinical problems most frequently encountered in day-to-day practice, and *Conn's Current Therapy* does exactly that. Although the emphasis appears to favor adult internal medicine, primary care obstetrics, gynecology, pediatrics, and urology are fairly represented. Fracture management is not included.

The format of the text is traditional: it is divided into 17 major sections, including the respiratory system, the cardiovascular system, metabolic disorders, psychiatric disorders, and the like. A more novel section on physical and chemical injuries includes poisonings, bites, burns, cold injuries, and mountain sickness. Additionally, a separate section updates the most recent drugs approved by the Food and Drug Administration, including formal use recommendations as well as the FDA rating for each drug. Each of the main sections is divided into about 20 chapters ranging from 3 to 20 pages. Although there are no photographs or radiographs, the authors' frequent use of summary tables (eg, nonpharmacologic treatments for insomnias) is particularly effective as quick reference.

This edition continues to provide concise, timely, and easy-to-read reviews of most of the problems commonly encountered by primary care clinicians. Its advantage in the office compared with other comprehensive medicine textbooks derives from the rapidity with which information can be accessed. Its focus is therapy; seldom encountered syndromes are not considered here. That references are omitted—a potential drawback—adds to its conciseness.

Practicing primary care physicians who include pediatric and basic gynecologic care would make up the ideal audience for this book. In my office, it has proved its

value in day-to-day practice. During a full week's experience, with the exception of fracture care, this book thoroughly addressed every therapeutic concern I had. As a final bonus, the inside cover of this edition provides the ICD-9-CM coding for approximately 400 diagnoses.

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**Nelson - Essentials of Pediatrics. Third edition.** Edited by Richard E. Behrman and Robert M. Kliegman. 846 pp, illustrated. WB Saunders Company, 1998. \$42.50 (paper). ISBN 0-7216-7229-9.

Produced by the editors of the larger *Nelson Textbook of Pediatrics*, this smaller *Essentials of Pediatrics* was designed specifically as a readable and informative educational text for students and house officers newly introduced to the field of pediatrics. In the words of the editors, "it is not a primer, and it is not a synopsis or a companion to the *Nelson Textbook of Pediatrics*." They have selected important pediatric problems and diseases and have attempted to present them in a concise but readable form with emphasis on pathophysiology and mechanisms of disease. The length is such that it could be read and digested during a core pediatric clerkship. By comparison, this text has about one third the number of pages as the larger text, slightly more than one half as many chapters, 24 versus 212 contributors, and many fewer references. It is a paperback book sized to easily fit into a briefcase or backpack, but not into a coat pocket.

Organizationally there are 19 chapters, some of which are arranged by organ system (gastrointestinal, cardiac, respiratory, etc), some by discipline (genetics, infectious disease, oncology, nutrition, etc), and some by patient age (child development, fetus and newborn, adolescent medicine). In addition, an appendix contains a formulary of pediatric drug dosages and indications for treatment, as well as a table of drug interactions.

A wealth of charts and tables help summarize and compare a multitude of related clinical entities in a graphic and easily understandable form. The text emphasizes pathogenesis, etiology, clinical manifestations, and differential diagnosis of various selected conditions, and sometimes minimizes discussion of treatment. Not simply an outline or summary, the book strives to provide a readable narrative while conforming to a format similar to that of a standard textbook.

This new third edition updates the previous 1994 version. It is only slightly longer (50 pages), has changed only a few of the contributors and added two more, and has retained the same format and appearance. One must look hard to find actual changes in content. Some of the recent advances that have been added include the recommendation to have infants sleep supine to reduce the risk of sudden infant death