

Conn's Current Therapy 1997. Latest Approved Methods of Treatment for the Practicing Physician. Edited by Robert E. Rakel. 1354 pp. Philadelphia, WB Saunders Company, 1996. \$57.50. ISBN 0-7216-8674-5.

Conn's Current Therapy 1997 is the 49th edition, and if you have enjoyed the past editions, you certainly will not be disappointed. The intent of this book is "...to focus on problems frequently encountered in practice and those less common conditions that could have serious consequences..." and to provide ... "up-to-date information on recent advances in medicine in a concise...manner." Once again Dr. Rakel has orchestrated an incredible feat, with 437 experts contributing to this edition (95 percent of the authors are new). Of the 303 articles, 289 either are appearing for the first time or have been newly revised. This edition accomplishes its goals and serves as an excellent comprehensive resource text for the family physician. It is simply astounding that one text can contain such a wealth of information and be so economically priced.

The format of the previous editions is maintained and includes current information presented in an easy-to-read manner. The book is organized into 17 different sections according to body systems. It includes 6 new topics not covered in previous editions: chronic fatigue syndrome, high-altitude sickness, giardiasis, erectile dysfunction, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, and hypertrophic cardiomyopathy. The outline format of each chapter makes finding information expeditious for the busy practitioner. Almost all the chapters include quick-reference tables displaying treatment information. Some (but not all) chapters have helpful diagnostic and therapeutic algorithms. The content is uniformly up-to-date, concise, and reliable. The appendix (section 18) has a useful section on laboratory test interpretation with reference values shown both conventionally and in le Système International d'Unités (SI units). There is even a useful table referencing toxic substances. The index is well planned, easy to use, and reliable.

There are a few shortcomings. I was surprised that none of the chapters contained a bibliography referencing the evidence-based data to validate the author's approach. One of the features of this text is "...new authors presenting their favorite treatment methods..."; this approach might imply treatment strategy bias. The section on skin and nail diseases lacks graphics. Illustrations, photographs, or even color plates would have been helpful for the reader. Although the content is written in an easy-to-read manner, some readers might find the variation in the print size within some chapters challenging, if not downright annoying (get out the bifocals!). I am also not sure of the value of having 4 appendix pages devoted to the top 200 drugs prescribed in the United

States. Does any practitioner ever use this information?

Despite these shortcomings, *Conn's Current Therapy 1997* is an extremely useful resource for the busy practitioner. I must applaud the editor's success in covering so much material in this edition. It is truly jam-packed with valuable information. This text belongs on every medical library bookshelf as well as in the call room of any trainee and practicing primary care provider.

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On Call: Obstetrics and Gynecology. By Homer G. Chin. 391 pp., illustrated. Philadelphia, WB Saunders Company, 1997. \$19.50 (paper). ISBN 0-7216-1316-0.

Many residents and medical students purchase or create their own pocket manuals for various training rotations. Certainly many such published books have been crafted to provide the reader with key information in a concise, step-by-step fashion. Not unlike many other fields of medical practice, the practice of obstetrics and gynecology is not necessarily limited by time or place. The book *On Call: Obstetrics and Gynecology* was conceived by the author to address common obstetric and gynecologic problems encountered not only by housestaff and medical students but also by emergency department and urgent care physicians who do not have immediate access to consultants in these specialty areas.

After an introductory chapter on the female reproductive system and maternal physiological changes, the main text is divided into 35 sections on common topics in obstetrics and gynecology. The topics are fairly representative of typical problems within the specialties, including abnormal labor, hypertensive disorders of pregnancy, placenta previa, postpartum depression, abnormal uterine bleeding, sexual assault, and various infections of the genital tract. Discussions do not include routine care of the prenatal patient or of the woman during labor or in the postpartum period, and the book omits substantive references to some fairly common problems, including diabetes mellitus and herpes simplex infections in pregnancy.

For the most part, the text is well organized and readable and is accompanied by appropriate graphs, charts, tables, and several appendices. The appendix on the effects of various medications in pregnancy would have been more useful had the author included similar information for lactation. Each chapter is organized into the same format: background information, clinical presentation, the typical telephone call for the problem with suggested questions and orders, elevator thoughts for the trainee en route to see the patient, assessment of urgency and threat to life, bedside assessment, diagnostic testing, and management.