

Book Reviews

Evidence-Based Clinical Practice: Concepts and Approaches. Edited by John P. Geyman, Richard A. Deyo, and Scott D. Ramsey. 177 pp., illustrated. Woburn, Mass, Butterworth Heinemann, 2000. \$35 (paper). ISBN 0-7506-7097-5.

Evidence-based medicine has become part of the jargon of modern medicine. Even so, the principles behind evidence-based medicine have remained generally a mystery to practicing physicians as well as students. This book successfully addresses this mystery.

The editors describe six goals of this book: to introduce evidence-based medicine as part of clinical decision making, provide skills for critically reviewing the literature, improve physicians skills as decision makers, describe the relation between clinical judgment and evidence-based medicine, describe techniques and limitations of cost and outcomes assessment, and describe the use of evidence-based medicine in the care of populations. To effect these goals, the editors intersperse previously published journal articles with chapters offering new content. As a result, there is a minimum amount of disorganization in the progression of chapters. The authors make up a distinguished interdisciplinary panel with diverse expertise. The content is visually appealing, with each chapter divided into easily identified sections. Numerous tables and figures help illustrate important learning points.

Specific content includes methods for defining evidence in medicine, how to evaluate the evidence, and then how to use it to answer clinically relevant questions. Although a specific chapter focuses on computer aids to practice, almost every chapter includes computer-assisted learning resources.

This book would be ideal for experienced clinicians trying to define an approach to the ever-increasing amount of medical information and its relative easy availability through the Internet and other sources. It is also well designed for learners at all levels, including students and residents. This book sets the foundation to demystify evidence-based clinical practice.

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Handbook of Antihypertensive Therapy. Ninth edition. By Mark C. Houston, Beth Pulliam Meador, and Linda Moore Schipani. 166 pp., illustrated. Philadelphia, Hanley & Belfus, 1999. \$19.95 (paper). ISBN 1-56053-322-6.

The 1999 version of the *Handbook of Antihypertensive Therapy* is the latest edition of a pocket-sized book that was originally published in 1986. The book deals exclusively with hypertension, addressing such other topics as diabetes or dyslipidemia only to the extent that they

affect, and are affected by, hypertension. The ninth edition incorporates the results of many new hypertension studies and specifically compares the efficacy of new antihypertensive drugs with old standbys. The *Handbook of Antihypertensive Therapy* does not have a foreword to explain its target audience or its purpose. It is a handbook, so one might surmise that it is meant to be portable. It also contains many tables, which would make it valuable to a resident on rounds.

The book is put together like an overhead presentation, with most information occurring in tables, lists, figures, and so on. There are few pages of actual text. This format is helpful for quick reference. There is a good discussion, again in table and list form, of such commonly neglected topics as proper technique for taking a blood pressure, common errors, nonpharmacologic treatment, and the definition of the five Korotkoff sounds. There is also a discussion of the pathophysiology of hypertension and the burden of disease. The major hypertension trials from 1979 to 1992 are summarized, with major findings and their importance listed. With this book in hand, you will finally be able to speak knowledgeably about the results of MRFIT or how the SYST-EUR trial differed in its methods, cohorts, and results from the CHEN-DU trial. Perhaps the best part of the book is the brief but useful discussion of each class of antihypertensive drug, with charts summarizing dosages, indications for use, adverse effects, contraindications, and drug interactions of individual medications from each class, including the obscure class of postganglionic neuron inhibitors.

The book has several weaknesses that make using it somewhat difficult. Some tables and figures are confusing, and I spent a long time trying to decide what some of them meant. A few of the tables seem to have little or no clinical usefulness. Topics are poorly organized, and treatment tables are mixed up with burden-of-disease tables. The antihypertensive drugs, summarized so well at the end of the book, are not in alphabetical order. Because there is no index, looking up one particular drug would be difficult. Finally, the formatting lacks consistency, so that different pages have a different look about them, even when they are dealing with the same topic.

The *Handbook of Antihypertensive Therapy* is a good resource for the student, resident, or practicing clinician who is looking for a summary of the hypertension trials and a chart of the dosages and characteristics of antihypertensive drugs. For those two sections alone I believe this book is worth buying, although the buyer will have to contend with the problems of poor organization and lack of index.

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