Herbal Medicinals: A Clinicians' Guide. *Edited by Lucinda G. Miller and Wallace J. Murray. 382 pp. Binghamton, NY, The Haworth Press, 1998. $59.95, $39.95 (paper). ISBN 0–7890-4066–6.*

Herbals and supplements are the most frequently used alternative medicine modality in North America. Physicians are being urged to become familiar with these products to better advise their patients about the safety and efficacy and to be able to recognize and manage toxicities, adverse effects, and herb-drug interactions. This information is not part of traditional medical curricula, and most medical clinicians are ill equipped to respond to these inquiries and clinical situations. Till the present time, physicians have preferred to ignore the growing public interest in the subject. The time has past, however, for the medical profession to plead ignorance, and there is a great need for reliable, scientifically based information to help guide practicing clinicians in all disciplines.

The text is divided into 17 chapters that cover such topics as the use of herbal medications for common chronic illnesses, including diabetes, hypertension, arthritis, dyslipidemia, anxiety and depression, and asthma. In addition, there are chapters on herbals in cancer prevention and treatment, as well as herbals for colds and flu, dermatologic problems, gastrointestinal problems, and substance abuse. Four chapters deal with the adverse effects of herbals, including renal and hepatic effects as well as gynecologic and obstetric concerns. The concluding chapter reviews the history of herbals in America and outlines the legal and regulatory problems precipitated by the Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act of 1994.

What sets this book apart from the many texts on the market is its practical clinical orientation. The authors use entertaining case studies to illustrate the ways in which herbs can be used by patients and highlight safety considerations and herb-drug interactions. The references are comprehensive and up to date, and each chapter ends with a summary statement that is useful for busy clinicians. As a reference text for immediate information about specific herbs, however, this book is less accessible than *Tyler's Honest Herbal* by Stephen Foster and Varro Tyler, also published by The Haworth Press. *Tyler's Honest Herbal* is an alphabetically arranged compendium of information about 121 herbals that is easy to access and well referenced to the scientific literature. *Herbal Medicinals*, however, provides more in-depth information about a smaller selection of herbals with detailed clinical implications for common problems. These two books together will provide clinicians with more than ample information on the subject of herbals and enable them to respond to questions about indications, safety, efficacy, and toxicity.

Add to your library a small gem of a book, *The Vitamin Book* by Silverman, Romano, and Elmer (unfortunately available only in a nondurable soft-cover edition), which addresses vitamins, minerals, and dietary supplements, and one would have three excellent scientifically grounded and clinically relevant reference texts for just more than $100. All three books by respected pharmacologic experts are highly recommended.

Ronald Schneeweiss, MB, ChB
Unversity of Washington, Seattle

Diamond and Dalessio's The Practicing Physician's Approach to Headache. Sixth edition. *By Merle L. Diamond and Glen D. Solomon. 272 pp. Philadelphia, W B Saunders, 1999. ISBN 0–7216-6999–9.*

This is the sixth edition of a long-established textbook on headache. There has been a 7-year interval since the last edition in 1992. While some contributors have added a notable number of references, most references predate 1992.

There is no reference in the Preface to the target audience, so the audience has to be implied. From the tone and scope of the text, the audience appears to be primary care physicians rather than subspecialists or pain specialists. The style is relatively uniform but quality among the chapters is uneven; there are strong chapters on hormonal headaches, etiology, imaging, and psychological issues.

This book provides a comprehensive survey of all common headaches, including their investigation and management. Standard chapters on history taking and examination are complemented by one on classification of headache. The critically important issues around the role and limits of imaging are well covered. The overall style of most chapters is fairly heavily biomedical. Structural causes of headache are extensively treated despite their rarity as an explanation for headache in the primary care setting.

Relevance to family practice is limited. The biomedical tone and emphasis on structural and medical causes do not fit the biopsychosocial modes of medical practice. The psychological chapters on etiology and treatments are among the best in the book but seem somewhat disconnected from the rest of the text.

An important omission is the coverage of chronic daily headache (rebound headache or transformed migraine) that affects about 5% of the general population and represents up to 70% of referrals to headache programs. The chapter on analgesic overuse contains no reference to Nathan Mathew, who first described the condition.

Overall, this book is clearly written and well organized, and the quality and selection of illustrations are

good. Although it has some value as a reference guide, relevance for primary care is somewhat limited.

Thomas R. Taylor, MD, MPH
University of Washington, Seattle

Tyler's Honest Herbal. A Sensible Guide to the Use of Herbs and Related Remedies. Fourth edition. *By Steven Foster and Varro E. Tyler. 342 pp. Binghamton, NY, The Haworth Press, 1999. $24.95(paper). ISBN 0–7890-0875–0.*

I groaned when I saw the title of the book I was to review. I am an ardent nonbeliever in most things alternative, complementary, natural, or herbal. Like most family physicians, however, I have many patients who take or are considering taking a variety of natural products. Consequently, despite my own thoughts on these products, I need to know something about them to provide appropriate care for my patients. For several years I have been happily using *The Review of Natural Products* published by Facts and Comparisons as a reference. It contains short reviews of many hundreds of natural products in a standardized format that is easy to use and updated monthly. I occasionally give well-educated patients copies of information about particular products from the book.

Tyler's Honest Herbal claims to provide an unbiased evaluation of the use of about 120 herbs. With its informal tone and large print, the book is written for the general public rather than for medical professionals. My initial negative reaction to the book was reinforced by the lack of traditional academic credentials of the first author, as well as the name of the publisher. The duplication of two identical glowing reviews in the front of the book reinforced my skepticism. I was pleasantly surprised, therefore, when I read the introductory sections of the book. The authors clearly recommend caution when using any herbal product and explain their concerns. They pose the question: "If so many of the herbal remedies have little or no value, or may even be dangerous to a person's health, why have they become so popular in recent years?" Their answer is, at least partly, the placebo effect.

After these introductory sections are brief chapters describing each of the herbs. Most chapters have the following format: a brief description of the herb and its proper nomenclature, alleged uses, pharmacology of the active ingredients, authors' opinion of probable utility, and references. The book closes with a summary chart listing the common and scientific name of the herb, the part of the plant used, principal uses, apparent efficacy, and probable safety.

Unfortunately, I suspect that relatively few patients will take the time to read the introductory information but will instead turn directly to the summary chart. (If they actually read the introduction, they should have no further interest in taking herbal products!) This is particularly worrisome because the "apparent efficacy" section of the summary chart is more encouraging than is the information presented in the individual chapters. For example, *Echinacea* gets an "effective" rationing in the summary chart. The *Echinacea* chapter, however, concludes with the statement: "Much more work on the efficacy of echinacea for various conditions in human subjects must be carried out before a definitive statement can be made regarding its utility as a modern therapeutic agent."

In conclusion, *Tyler's Honest Herbal* is not a useful reference book for family physicians. The introductory sections can be highly recommenced reading to patients. After reading these sections, however, the patient should throw the book away!

Diane J. Madlon-Kay, MD
Minneapolis, Minn

Mosby's Family Practice Sourcebook 2000: Evidence-Based Emphasis. *By Kenneth G. Marshall. 432 pp, illustrated. St. Louis, Mo, Mosby, 1999. $59 (paper). ISBN 1–55664-468-X.*

Mosby's Family Practice Sourcebook 2000: Evidence-Based Emphasis is an excellent quick reference for any family practice or primary care office. The emphasis in the book is to bring an evidence-based approach to many of the common issues faced by practicing clinicians. The objective of patient-oriented evidence that matters (POEM) provided guidance to the development of this book.

The book is organized generally in a systems-based fashion. The Table of Contents is easily accessed on the front and back covers. The more detailed Index is available in the back of the book. Within each system a number of common issues and problems are addressed. An example is breast diseases, in which there are sections focusing on breast pain, implants, risk factor prevention and lifetime risk of breast cancer, breast self-examination by health professionals, mammography, ductal cancer, and management of breast cancer. These topics occupy 12 pages of the book. Each section addresses clinically relevant issues and includes a reference area of its own.

This approach is not only effective for the clinical environment, but it will also allow the reader to find more in-depth information on a topic of interest. The references tend to be from easily accessible journals and reports.

In addition to a systems-based approach, there are chapters on important health care topics, such as community health, dentistry, exercise, nutrition, and smoking. These chapters address issues that are often overlooked in a disease-based approach. Although there are limited diagrams and pictures, the text is concise, often with highlighted numerical points.

Overall, this book would be of value to any clinician, resident, or student. It includes clinically relevant material that is presented in a highly structured and focused manner, and it has excellent references.

Scott A. Fields, MD
Oregon Health Sciences University, Portland

Atlas of Pediatric Clinical Diagnosis. *By Binita R. Shah and Teresita A. Laude. 512 pp, illustrated. Philadelphia, W B Saunders, 2000. $79. ISBN 0–7216-7639–1.*

This new addition to the library of pediatric reference sources is a collaborative endeavor motivated by the extensive collection of medical photographs compiled by the two authors during the years of their combined clinical experience. The strength of the book is the great number of photographs, which are of excellent quality. There are 623 illustrations, 387 of which are in color. The only limitation is that the illustrations seem to have determined the content, rather than the other way around. Nevertheless, the subject matter is extensive, with the greatest coverage going naturally to those entities that can be captured on film. The largest chapter is on dermatology, which is the primary field of interest of the authors; the next largest being infectious diseases with good illustrations of the childhood exanthems. Other sections cover a variety of bodily organ systems, plus chapters on physical and sexual abuse, neonatology, emergencies, and genetic disorders. The specific chapters contain illustrations of most of the more common entities, as well as some of the more unusual, but they do not attempt to be comprehensive and are limited to those conditions for which photographs were available.

There is more to this book than just an atlas of photographs. The text that accompanies each entry addresses, in outline form, the basic features, such as definition, etiology, pathogenesis, clinical manifestations, helpful laboratory aids, differential diagnosis, and treatment. In many instances, these features are summarized into concise tables that are in keeping with the visual orientation of the book. In addition, boxes highlight clinical pearls, diagnostic keys, and other important take-home-messages.

This book would be of value to any clinician faced with the challenge of making diagnostic decisions in children. As an on-hand reference source, one could readily compare physical findings with the photograph of the suspected condition, and even when the diagnosis is not confirmed, the text can offer helpful hints at the differential diagnosis alternatives. In addition, students who peruse this book are likely to remember the vivid illustrations when they subsequently encounter an actual patient with the same condition. For those who learn visually, years of clinical experience have been captured and presented in a clear and well-organized manner. This, along with a concise account of the important features of the disease, provides a core of essential information on a great many pediatric conditions.

Leland Davis, MD
University of California, San Francisco

Dying at Home: A Family Guide for Caregiving. *By Andrea Sankar. 296 pp, illustrated. Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999. $45, $16.95 (paper). ISBN: 0–8018-6203–5, 0–28018-6203–7 (paper).*

This excellent book provides a wealth of information about dying at home, a difficult and increasingly important area of health care in the United states. A growing number of patients and families are seeking a greater level of control at the end of life and are looking for a more humane environment for life to end than might occur in a nursing home or the intensive care unit of a hospital. They are seeking as high a degree of quality of life as is possible under their circumstances and in the time remaining for them. Family physicians, who are the most likely specialty group to provide long-term continuity of care to patients and families, will find this book helpful for themselves and their patients.

The author is a gerontologist, a medical anthropologist, and a skilled writer who clearly knows how to present her material in an interesting, readable, and informative way. Physicians and other health care providers, as well as lay persons, should be able to understand the material provided. She has organized the material in a practical and sensible format that allows one to read whole sections regarding an area of interest or just a subsection to solve a specific problem. A great many representative cases are presented, often from the standpoint of both the caregiver and the dying person, which provide specific instructive material and helpful discussions. There is a wealth of practical solutions to commonly encountered problems.

The importance of maintaining autonomy and dignity is effectively presented. Physicians and hospitals often represent and provide technical expertise, they but can fall short of recognizing the needs and desires of the patients and their families. These needs vary widely, and the book addresses these variations wisely and thoroughly. Ethical dilemmas are sensitively presented and discussed. It is clearly important to establish boundaries and maintain privacy. The expenses involved can be considerable, and they are frankly discussed. The negative and difficult aspects of home care are addressed, as are the positive, uplifting aspects of dying at home.

The illustrations and table are few but very helpful.

Caring for the dying person at home is one of the most important and meaningful tasks anyone can undertake. This book is a wonderful guide toward that end. I strongly recommend it for family physicians.

Jack Leversee, MD
Seattle, Wash