

Book Reviews

Adventures in Medicine: One Doctor's Life amid the Great Discoveries of 1940-1990. By Sibley Hoobler. 109 pp. Cleveland, Case Western Reserve University, 1991. ISBN 0-963063-00-6.

This publication is a set of short stories that are meant to convey in lay terms the advances in medicine through which the author has lived. He states the book was written to "interest the student considering a career in health sciences and the intelligent lay reader who wants to be informed of recent medical advances." Reaching the second goal of informing the lay reader would probably be accomplished. Students considering careers in the health sciences might not be so enthusiastic about reading this book. The first section contains the author's autobiography, which was included to encourage his grandchildren to choose a career related to medicine. This very worthwhile goal would probably not be of interest to every reader.

The remaining chapters of the book were prepared as lectures to the Rowfant Literary Club of Cleveland. For those of us who were born before 1940, the stories help us to appreciate the important advances that have been made in medicine. The book can be helpful to physicians who are asked to give a lecture to a lay audience and who want to cite specific examples of medical advances and relate them to our present quality of health.

The organization of the lectures is not in any chronological order, and there are no illustrations. While the stories are very readable, except for their historical value, they have no specific relevance to the content of family practice. The book is geared to lay readers and does not add much to the literature or libraries of family physicians.

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Arthritis Therapy: A Clinician's Manual. By Thomas G. Kantor. 243 pp. Durant, Oklahoma, Essential Medical Information Systems, 1992. \$12.95 (paper). ISBN 0-929240-40-5.

Arthritis Therapy: A Clinician's Manual is the newest publication in the series of Center Index Texts by Essential Medical Information Systems. This 243-page book has been designed as a quick reference on the management of arthritis. It is divided into two major sections: general information about the arthritides and summary information about the drug therapies available through 1991.

The first 14 chapters are devoted to a discussion of 36 arthritic conditions, divided into 14 categories.

Each entry includes information on the clinical presentation, appropriate laboratory tests, and treatment options. This section is designed as a "memory-tickler." The reader must search other sources for detailed information concerning cause, laboratory tests, or therapies.

Nearly one-half the book is dedicated to the following types of drug therapies: first-line drugs, which include salicylates and nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs); second-line drugs, which include gold, antimalarial medications, corticosteroids, penicillamine, and methotrexate; third-line drugs, which include alkylating agents and purine analogues; anti-gout medications, which include colchicine, allopurinol, and uricosuric agents; and pain medications. Each drug entry includes information on pharmacokinetics, adverse effects, and dosage. The subheadings, however, are not standardized.

Chapters 15 through 17 touch briefly on nondrug therapies for arthritis, particularly exercise. Chapter 17 lists sources of information about arthritis that are available to the public. The last chapter in the book briefly discusses how to assess response to treatment, both clinically and with laboratory tests.

One very useful feature of this manual is the blank page entitled Notes at the end of each chapter. In other respects, however, this book appears to be cheaply constructed. All of the headings are the same point size, which makes it difficult to separate the disease or drug being discussed from the subheadings. Although the beginning of each chapter is identified by a tab with the chapter number, the chapters are not numbered in the table of contents. Also, no index is available.

Some of the information appears to be misplaced. At the end of Chapter 1, which deals with rheumatoid arthritis, is Table 1.1, "NSAIDs Available in the U.S." It would seem more logical to place this table in Chapter 18, Introduction to NSAIDs. There are two sections on exercise therapy, one in Chapter 2, which deals with spondyloarthropathies, and the other in Chapter 15, which deals with rehabilitation. It would seem more logical to combine these two sections.

Although 214 references are listed at the end of the book, it is not always possible to determine the source of information in the text. For instance, in the discussion about estrogen replacement therapy for osteoporosis, the manual states, "Oral diethylstilbestrol at 5 mg daily for three weeks each month will usually suffice." Because this therapy is not uniform, a footnote would be helpful.

Although this book was written by a rheumatologist working in a tertiary care center, the author has

a very practical approach based on 30 years of experience. In the introduction he comments, "Therapeutic aggressiveness must be tempered by the potential of the therapy used to cause undesirable results." Throughout the text Dr. Kantor provides important points about adverse effects and laboratory monitoring. The manual is worth purchasing if the primary care clinician wants a "memory-jogger" concerning the medical management of the arthritides.

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Conn's Current Therapy, 1992. Edited by Robert E. Rakel. 1248 pp., illustrated. Philadelphia, W.B. Saunders, 1992. \$55. ISBN 0-7216-4269-1.

Outstanding Broadway plays fill theaters for many years. *Conn's Current Therapy* entered the medical stage in 1949 and with this edition answers the curtain call for the 44th year. This longevity indicates a dedicated audience of readers who return to a familiar text to find useful medical information.

This edition updates all of the 280 topics reviewed. The chapters remain concise and readable, and revisions address changes in therapy that have occurred since the last publication. The text is arranged in broad sections that parallel the traditional curriculum in internal medicine. Particularly strong sections exist for infectious disease, cardiology, hematology, and pulmonary medicine.

For quick review family physicians will find the internal medicine sections of *Conn's Current Therapy* more useful than most internal medicine texts. Other sections provide limited help to most generalists, because coverage of musculoskeletal disorders, pediatrics, psychiatry, and obstetrics and gynecology are not comprehensive. The section on dermatology contains no pictures, which diminishes its value.

The long-term success of *Conn's Current Therapy* underscores that this text has found a niche in the practitioner's library. The editor and authors meet the goal of "providing the practicing physician with a concise, practical reference that includes the most recent advances in therapy." Family physicians whose practices heavily emphasize internal medicine will find this book a true friend, while others can always use the text for a quick review of common medical problems.

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Difficult Diagnosis 2. Edited by Robert B. Taylor. 576 pp., illustrated. Philadelphia, W.B. Saunders, 1992. \$60. ISBN 0-7216-3481-8.

Difficult Diagnosis 2 is the second volume of a series of collected clinical problems that represent diagnostic challenges to the physician. The problems selected

for this volume, typically signs, symptoms, or abnormal laboratory values, occur with varying frequency in a general or family practice.

The 71 topics are authored by family physicians and other specialists. Arranged alphabetically, each chapter addresses a clinical problem and includes background information, important components of the history with examples of focused questions, physical examination, diagnostic studies, and assessment. Topics are representative of most areas of medicine except perhaps for obstetrics. A sampling of some of the clinical problems includes chronic fatigue, hoarseness, acute chest pain, stridor, hepatomegaly, pelvic mass, limb pain in childhood, and hypoglycemia.

Some chapters focus on less common problems, such as athetosis and phantogeusia (phantom taste). The authors, however, provide a directed and concise discussion of these problems so that the busy physician can deal with these diagnostic challenges during the time-limited office visit.

The language of the text is quite readable. Individual chapter sections are clearly labeled for easy reference, and photographs, tables, and diagrams are used carefully to highlight salient points. Readers will need to rely on other general texts, however, for information regarding treatment.

The editor acknowledges that the primary audience of this text is the family physician and the limited specialist who encounters patients with problems outside his or her expertise. Certainly, it is important to remember that family physicians must address difficult cases in the primary care office without resorting to premature referral. This book will serve the family physician extremely well and underscores the importance of complete and dedicated diagnostic evaluations of patient problems.

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Handbook of Drug Therapy in Rheumatic Disease: Pharmacology and Clinical Aspects. By Joe G. Hardin, Jr. and Gesina L. Longenecker. 223 pp., illustrated. Boston, Little, Brown, 1991. \$29 (paper). ISBN 0-316-34604-7.

This review of drug therapy in rheumatic disease is thoughtful and eminently readable. The intention of this book is to provide information on the mechanism of actions and the use of different drugs in rheumatic disorders. My only reservation is that it lacks a section on osteoporosis management and treatment.

Essentially, the handbook is a practical guide for the busy primary care physician. Because the content of the text is well presented and relevant to family practice, it provides an efficient tool through which physicians can quickly review the treatment modalities for rheumatic disease. For the most part, the information appears to be up to date and well