

Book Review

Treatment of the Rheumatic Diseases: Companion to the Textbook of Rheumatology. Edited by Michael H. Weisman and Michael E. Weinblatt. 380 pp. Philadelphia, W.B. Saunders Company, 1995. ISBN 0-7216-5382-0.

Weisman and Weinblatt have assembled the work of 32 prominent authors in a triumphant effort toward assisting the primary care clinician with the therapeutic management of patients who have specific rheumatologic diagnoses. Twenty-two succinct chapters address the broad range of diagnoses from nonspecific low back pain to the sophisticated aspects of vasculitis. While the overwhelming emphasis is on therapeutic modalities, each of the chapters offers a respectable synopsis of the clinical appearance and pathophysiology pertinent to each major rheumatologic disorder including, in some circumstances, the natural progression of the untreated disease process.

The family physician will especially appreciate the chapters on lumbar spine disease, fibromyalgia, crystal deposition diseases, and osteoarthritis, given their high frequency of occurrence in office practice. The therapies associated with these entities are thoroughly reviewed, with alternative treatment methods offered in addition to the traditional and experimental options. The sections discussing Lyme disease and the Raynaud phenomenon appear both academically attractive yet totally relevant on a clinical basis. The remainder of the topics include rheumatoid arthritis and the rheumatic diseases of children, Sjögren syndrome, systemic lupus erythematosus, vasculitic disorders, polymyalgia rheumatica, scleroderma, ankylosing spondylitis, Reiter syndrome, psoriatic arthritis, inflammatory muscle diseases, and infectious agents in arthritic diseases. The only real drawback to some of these presentations is that at times their depth appears beyond that which many clinicians might desire. Several of the chapters deal with illnesses not often encountered in routine care (pediatric spondyloarthropathies, antiphospholipid antibody syndrome); however, they represent an excellent and thorough clinical resource when the specific entity is diagnosed.

Both the chapters on lumbar spine disease, which includes a brief discussion of the chronic pain, and the

fibromyalgia syndrome are useful every day in the office. These chapters exemplify the format found throughout the text. An introduction describes the clinical manifestation of the disease. Many chapters dwell appropriately on the relevant serologic and contemporary diagnostic criteria associated with the illness, and all of the chapters then allocate the majority of their discussions on reviewing the available therapeutic options. Some authors offer tables displaying treatment effectiveness or describe the results of relevant studies of treatment outcomes. In addition to medications both accepted and experimental, the treatment options of manipulation, physical therapy, and nonconventional therapy (acupuncture, biofeedback) and results of their controlled trials are offered for the reader's consideration. Many of the authors report their personal experience and recommendations for treatment, and most describe some of the investigational aspects concerning their topic.

Generally, the information and advice appear to offer contemporary consensus treatment for the specific rheumatologic illness. The variety of treatment options available is illustrated in the chapters on lumbar spine disease and fibromyalgia, as all forms of therapy offered in the United States are examined (e.g., facet injection, spinal cord stimulation, spinal opiate administration, biofeedback, and hypnotherapy). Numerous recent references accompany each section. On the whole this reference text for treatment options of the rheumatologic diseases is solid; however, the reader must keep in mind that as a reference text, it would be more appropriately used in detailed study rather than as a practice manual.

In conclusion, Weisman and Weinblatt have assembled a group of clinician scholars who have effectively conveyed contemporary ideas toward the goal of reducing the disability and pain associated with rheumatic diseases. Optimizing the gain from this reference requires the reader's focus given the sophistication of the material. Physicians whose practice interests include rheumatology will be satisfied with the depth of this material and its concise presentation.

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