

## Book Reviews

**Conn's Current Therapy 1996.** Edited by Robert E. Rakel. 1355 pp., illustrated. Philadelphia, W.B. Saunders, 1996. \$55. ISBN 0-7216-6259-5.

When I first started solo practice, among the first books I bought was the 1967 *Conn's Current Therapy*. Years later I discarded that book with the emotional attachment of an old friend. The 1996 version, the 48th edition of *Conn's Current Therapy*, appears to have carried on the tradition—it will have many old friends in the future.

It achieves its stated goal “to provide up-to-date information on recent advances in medicine, focusing on the treatment of problems frequently encountered in practice.” As part of my review of the book, I used it in our teaching Family Medical Center. I checked out as many problems and diagnoses as I could while supervising our family practice residents and third-year medical students. I did not find any areas with which I had a major disagreement. The frequent small tables with recommended initial and maximal doses of medications are excellent, and inclusion of both trade and generic names of medications is the correct way for clarity.

Also covered are less common problems that can be serious if not diagnosed and managed appropriately. The only major complaint I have about this book is that some problems that are discussed are not very common; eliminating a number of these problems would make the book less weighty and still meet its main goals.

The material is presented in a concise and easy-to-read format. By allocating an average of four pages per subject, the articles are an appropriate length for a quick reference book. With 299 authors, 95 percent of whom are new, for 299 sections, an annual publication of this book is a massive undertaking that is managed well by the editor and the publishing company. In its 48th year of publication, *Conn's Current Therapy* has been and continues to be an excellent quick reference book.

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**Emergency Medical Therapy. Fourth Edition.** Edited by Terry J. Mengert, Mickey S. Eisenberg, and Michael K. Copass. 992 pp. Philadelphia, W.B. Saunders, 1996. \$45 (paper). ISBN 0-7216-5162-3.

Twenty-five contributors have assembled this revision of a soft-cover manual for diagnosis and management of adult emergency problems. The editors have targeted the book toward students, house officers, and practitioners of emergency medicine. The content of the manual is appropriate as an initial reference for

family physicians encountering adult emergencies in the office or emergency department. Only acute medical problems are included, because the authors believed that the reader would be better served by a shorter book and by reference to other sources that comprehensively deal with trauma, such as the *Advanced Trauma Life Support Course Syllabus* by the American College of Surgeons. *Emergency Medical Therapy* is organized into (1) a general introductory section describing the initial triage of emergency patients, documentation requirements, pain management, and conscious sedation (28 pages); (2) medical chief complaints (eg, dizziness) that can get the workup started when the diagnosis is unknown (110 pages); and (3) medical emergencies arranged by diagnosis (726 pages).

The manual is written with clarity and consistency despite the great number of contributors. Tables and flow charts are used throughout; however, there are very few illustrations, mainly electrocardiogram rhythm strips. Occasionally we found the manual difficult to navigate because cross-references were in outline format, eg, “see Chapt. 11 (IV. A. 1),” which would require too much reading and searching should the information be needed urgently. An annoying inconsistency in the use of italics was noted; in one chapter all the physical signs of the disorder being described were italicized, whereas in the next chapter they were not.

The strengths of this manual were its tables (eg, Recommended Initial Mechanical Ventilator Settings and Antibiotic Therapy of Cellulitis) and the up-to-date references at the end of each chapter. The arrangement of Section II by chief complaint is excellent for students and younger house officers who might lack well-developed diagnostic skills or for the more seasoned clinician who needs to expand a differential diagnosis. At the end of most chapters is a paragraph entitled “Pearls and Pitfalls,” and these reminders of the dos and don'ts for a particular problem were extremely useful.

This manual is a useful addition to the reference shelf in the emergency department or to the office library of a primary care physician.

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**Positioning Your Practice for the Managed Care Market.** Edited by J. Thomas Danzi. 235 pp. Baltimore, Williams & Wilkins, 1996. \$29 (paper). ISBN 0-683-02373-X.

The intent of this book, as outlined in the preface, is to educate physicians about managed care, managed care contracts, and the evaluation of their care provided by managed care companies. This book serves as a primer on the topic of managed care, and the authors do a rea-