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Book Review

Meyler's Side Effects of Drugs 11th Edition

M.N.G. Dukes (Ed.)

Elsevier Science Publishers, Amsterdam, New York, Oxford, 1988, 1130 pp.; ISBN: 0-444-90484-0.

Price Dfl.425.00.

Over the years the Side Effects of Drugs series has done much to assemble and then present the clinician, the pharmacist and the research scientist with a reliable, authoritative and critical review of drug reactions and interactions. Published literature and the sequelae of national monitoring systems in identifying new adverse drug effects have provided a data base that has played a major role in disseminating information since the late Professor Leo Meyler founded the series 37 years ago. The contents also serve, when needed, as an arbiter and assessor of this global information to identify and quantify genuine clinical risks and to deal firmly with unfounded scaremongering and unconfirmed older anecdotal reports that have since been discredited.

As with the 9th and 10th Editions, the present volume has been arranged in the form of comprehensive chapter-monographs, each dealing with a drug grouping. There are 51 of these monographs; they range from CNS stimulants and anorectic agents to drugs used in non-orthodox medicine and they are written by distinguished international experts. This international authorship is important, since the volume is thus able to reflect a worldwide coverage of medication hazard. The 11th edition is of larger format than the 10th with an additional 163 pages of text. I am pleased to note that Chapter 4 is no longer entitled 'Social drugs' a most inept title with connotations of acceptance of use; it is now called 'Drugs of abuse' which is far more realistic. Chapter 18, formerly 'Cardiac glycosides and drugs used in dysrhythmias', is now updated to 'Positive inotropic drugs and drugs used in dysrhythmias'. Chapter 23, 'Metals, has now been complemented by 'Metal antagonists' (Chapter 24), while the last

Chapter, formerly 'Miscellaneous drugs' is now 'Miscellaneous drugs and materials' and, as its title implies, it now usefully covers surgical and dental materials and appliances in more detail than its predecessor.

Each chapter is fully referenced to current literature. A minor peccadillo, in my view, however, is that the style of the references gives only the first page number of the cited article. Last pages numbers are useful since they can indicate whether the citation is a brief one-page letter, note or communication, or a full-blown refereed paper. Importantly, for a reference work of this type, the index is comprehensive. The first section of the index deals with 'drugs', the second with 'side-effects' and this makes for easy and quick reference.

I have the greatest admiration for the prowess of the editor, Professor M.N.G. Dukes, who apart from his post as the European Regional Officer for Pharmaceuticals, World Health Organisation, finds time to edit, direct and contribute not only to the Meyler's Side Effects of Drugs series but also to the companion works 'Side Effects of Drug Annuals'. Other reviewers have used the word 'unique' to describe this collection of works. I can think of no better term; the current volume and its companions offer a 'unique' database of adverse events to drug therapy that is readily available for consultation and study by all who use, prescribe, research or develop medicines.

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