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## Book reviews

### **Bisphosphonate on Bones**

O.L.M. Bijvoet, H.A. Fleisch, R.E. Canfield and P.G.G. Russell (eds.)

Elsevier, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 455 pp., 1995, NLG445 (hard cover)

ISBN: 0-444-89132-3

“During the last quarter of a century, bisphosphonates have become a major tool in the management of bone disease second only to vitamin D.” This statement in the Preface to the book underlines the variety of bone disorders that can presently be treated with this class of drug and how effective such treatment is.

The editors have much experience in the clinical use of bisphosphonates, in The Netherlands, Switzerland, the USA and the UK, respectively. They have prepared this book with the stated objective of enabling physicians to profit optimally from the accumulated experience, to guide pharmacists in their teaching, to help pharmacologists in designing new bisphosphonates and to stimulate biologists in better elucidating their still elusive mechanisms of action.

The text recaptures the history of the bisphosphonates from their beginning, when they were mistakenly thought to be inhibitors of bone deposition rather than of resorption, to the present, where new potential indications, unrelated to bone resorption, are emerging in the management of rheumatoid arthritis. Already bisphosphonates have been shown to be effective in the treatment of adjuvant arthritis in animal models, although there are, as yet, insufficient data available to judge their effects in rheumatoid arthritis.

The book is divided into three sections: Part A,

The Physiology of Bone Resorption; Part B, Chemistry and Pharmacology of the Bisphosphonates; and Part C, The Bisphosphonates in the Treatment and Prevention of Bone Pathology. Collectively, there are 31 chapters in these sections that have been written by authors who have been leading the field in scientific and clinical research and development of the bisphosphonates in the USA, UK, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Denmark, France, Italy and Argentina.

Each chapter is well referenced, with full references to the current literature and there is a practical subject index to the contents. The book is a well illustrated and referenced guide to the history of the bisphosphonates and the scientific and clinical research that has emerged from this. The volume will be invaluable to all those workers who are involved in research in bone diseases and their treatment: clinical practitioners, specialists, pharmacologists and pre-clinical scientists working in research institutions and in the pharmaceutical industry. I would even go so far as to suggest that it is mandatory reading for anyone concerned with bisphosphonates.

P.F. D’Arcy

*School of Pharmacy*

*The Queen’s University of Belfast*

*Northern Ireland*

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**Martindale, The Extra Pharmacopoeia, 31st edn.**

James E.F. Reynolds (ed.)

Royal Pharmaceutical Society, London, xxi +

2739 pp., 1996, £176 (UK), £187 (overseas)  
ISBN: 0-85369-342-0

This new edition of Martindale follows its predecessor after just three years; this illustrates clearly how fast and how quickly the body of knowledge on medicines is developing. The stated aim of Martindale is to provide practising pharmacists and physicians with unbiased information on drugs and medicines used throughout the world and it achieves this objective superbly. For those who require even more up-to-date information from Martindale, there are the electronic versions, sections of which are updated more frequently.

The arrangement of Martindale is in three parts: Part 1 contains 4458 monographs arranged in 54 chapters. Part 2 consists of series of 784 short monographs arranged in alphabetical order of their main titles. This section includes monographs on some new drugs, on drugs not easily classified, and on drugs that are still of interest although no longer used clinically. There are also monographs on substances or techniques that may have a bearing on drug therapy such as bradykinin and gene therapy. Finally, there are monographs on toxic substances, the effects of which may require drug therapy. Part 3 lists proprietary preparations from a range of countries as well as official preparations from the UK and USA and from current pharmacopoeias and formularies. For proprietary preparations the information given includes the proprietary name, the manufacturer or distributor, the active ingredients and a summary of the information as given by the manufacturer.

All the monographs for the last edition have been revised; 173 have been deleted and 283 added and reorganised into chapters that better reflect the uses of the drugs being described. An example of this is that there is now one large chapter on Cardiovascular Agents to replace the former several chapters on groups such as diuretics or antihypertensive agents.

No one can accuse Martindale of being just substance orientated for it now includes in many of the monographs a description of those diseases

that are treated by drugs together with a review of the choice of such treatments. Cross references are provided between the monographs and these reviews and vice versa. This feature completes a development that was started in some chapters in the last edition.

The information on preparations has also been revised and the coverage of countries widened. Part 3 now describes 62 500 preparations or groups of preparations from 17 different countries. Within each preparation entry the individual ingredients have been indexed with the page numbers of the relevant drug monographs. In addition, entries in the General Index for single ingredient preparations show the page numbers of the preparation entries in Part 3 as well as of the appropriate monographs.

Martindale has always been based on published information, and in this edition there are 26 300 selected references. Many of the drug monographs are a page or more in length and summaries have been included where appropriate to provide readers with a brief overview.

The indices have always been a vital part of Martindale; there are some 4800 entries in the Directory of Manufacturers, while the General Index has been prepared from 131 500 individual index entries.

The publishers claim that this new edition of Martindale is more up-to-date, contains more material and is simpler to use than any previous edition and that it provides succinct and authoritative information on drugs and medicines that are used throughout the world. It is difficult for any reviewer to add superlatives to these statements for indeed they are true and need no augmentation merely confirmation. In my view Martindale is the most complete, comprehensive and up-to-date version of any drug index in print today. It is the most invaluable resource of drug information currently available for health professionals.

P.F. D'Arcy  
*School of Pharmacy*  
*The Queen's University of Belfast*  
*Northern Ireland*