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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)

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“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.

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Martindale, The Extra Pharmacopoeia, 31st edn.

James E.F. Reynolds (ed.)

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