

Book Reviews

Oxford Textbook of Clinical Pharmacology and Drug Therapy. 2nd edition. Edited by D. G. Graham-Smith and J. K. Aronson. Oxford University Press, New York. 1992. xviii + 756 pp. 18.5 × 24 cm. ISBN 0-19-261675-7. \$49.95.

First published in 1984, this book was intended for medical students embarking on their clinical rotations. This latest effort aims for the same audience, although others may find it of interest. More of a syllabus than a textbook, the material is presented in four sections, three of which are divided into chapters composed of up to 13 subheadings. Chapter lengths vary from 2 pages (Patient Compliance) to 44 pages (The Drug Therapy of Cardiovascular Disorders).

Section I encompasses 17 chapters covering the basic principles of clinical pharmacology. While many of the topics are covered in most pharmacology texts, other subjects of particular interest and importance to the practicing physician are highlighted as well. This includes chapters on placebos, drug development and regulatory issues, and clinical trials.

Only three chapters are included in section II, which deals with prescriptions. There is a short bibliography in this section listing textbooks in pharmacology, toxicology, statistics, and pharmacokinetics, as well as pharmacopoeias and formularies.

Section III, contains 17 chapters on various classes of drugs and their uses. Each chapter is written by a contributing author and covers either a therapeutic area (e.g. cardiovascular disorders, psychiatric disorders), drug class (e.g. analgesics, general anesthetics), or other clinical conditions (drug dependence and abuse, poisoning). In most cases the basic pathophysiology of the disorder is briefly reviewed as is the mechanism of action of the drugs used to treat the condition. However, these issues are covered in only a cursory manner. For example, the mechanisms of action of antibiotics are described in three

paragraphs and one figure, and receptors, receptor agonists, antagonists, partial agonists, and receptor subtypes are discussed in two paragraphs.

Section IV is a pharmacopoeia containing information on approximately 300 drugs of choice. Information provided includes brief statements on the mechanism of action, clinical uses, dosages, kinetics, adverse effects, and, in some cases, chemical structure.

Overall, the information provided is presented in a concise and straightforward manner, with the results of clinical studies and anecdotal information presented to reinforce important principles. Since the book contains no references to the primary literature, those wishing to pursue a topic in more depth will have to seek out other sources on their own. Although it is written by British scientists as a guide for British clinicians, most of the information is relevant to those practicing medicine in North America as well.

As current trends in medical education are moving toward placing greater emphasis on the teaching of medical practice over medical science, this second edition may find an even wider audience than the first. While those seeking fundamental information about the chemical properties of pharmaceuticals or pharmacodynamic aspects of drug action should look elsewhere, those interested in gaining some appreciation for the physician's perspective on these topics, as well as on clinical issues of importance in selecting a particular therapy, will benefit from perusing this volume. As intended, this book will be of greatest value for clinicians, especially those in the process of moving from the lecture hall to the bedside.

S. J. Enna

*Department of Pharmacology
Toxicology and Therapeutics
University of Kansas Medical School
Kansas City, Kansas 66160*