Drugs and Therapy: A Handbook of Psychotropic Drugs, 2nd Ed. By ALVIN SWONGER and LARRY CONSTANTINE. Little, Brown and Company, 34 Beacon Street, Boston, MA 02106 1983. 431 pp. 15.5 × 23.5 cm. Price $18.95 (paperback).

This book is unusual in that it is directed to nonmedical personnel. The "therapy" of the title refers not to those modalities that medical people generally consider therapy, but more specifically to psychosocial approaches to treatment. The authors are a faculty member of a school of pharmacy and a family therapist. The intended audience might be nurses, social workers, psychologists, or others not primarily concerned with the use of drugs in treatment, but who may need to know what types of drugs their clients are taking and what effects these drugs may have on them.

This second edition has been expanded to include new sections not in the first. It is organized around eight general topics, each of which is covered in a few short chapters: drugs in therapeutic perspective (again, meaning from the perspective of the psychotherapist); foundations of drug action (a review of basic neuropharmacology); drug use and abuse; drugs and the arousal state (referring to sedative-hypnotics, alcohol, stimulants, and psychedelics); psychiatric disorders and drugs (psychosis, anxiety, depression, and mania); motor functions and drugs; pain and its drug management; and drugs and consciousness (which includes anticonvulsants). Each section is headed by a short introduction indicating the aims of the several chapters that follow.

The book is well illustrated with figures and tables. Most of these have appeared in either the same or slightly different form in other books. Virtually all the references are also to books or book chapters. Thus, it appears that the authors have attempted a synthesis of much that has already been published, tailoring it to the needs of the prospective audience. Relatively little emphasis has been placed on how specific drugs are used, but each chapter that discusses a class of drugs finishes with a brief synopsis providing the generic and trade names of the drug, the class to which they belong, their usual indications, and the usual range of daily doses. The major emphases are on how the drugs work in the nervous system and how they may affect the behavior of interest to the psychotherapist.

The book is well written and generally free of errors. It should certainly meet the needs of its intended audience, but would probably be inadequate for pharmacists or physicians. The only other book that I can remember that addressed a similar audience was one that Honigfeld wrote many years ago. Thus, the present volume services a useful need. It would be well worth having as a reference handbook for those who need to know how drugs affect their clients.

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Calcium Antagonism in Heart and Smooth Muscle: Experimental Facts and Therapeutic Perspectives. By ALBRECHT FLECKENSTEIN. John Wiley and Sons, Inc., One Wiley Drive, Somerset, NJ 08873. 1983. 399 pp. 17 × 24 cm. Price $60.00.

Calcium antagonists have generated considerable interest in the pharmaceutical sciences since nifedipine was reported to be effective in the treatment of Printzmetal angina. This book constitutes a major tool for understanding the role of calcium and calcium antagonism in the heart and smooth muscle. The reader will find important information about the pharmacological properties of verapamil and its derivative, nifedipine and its derivatives, and diltiazem. It is not the first book published on this subject; however, the author makes this one very original.

Dr. Albrecht Fleckenstein investigated this field for more than 20 years. He is recognized as one of the most important contributors to the advancement accomplished in this field. This book provides indispensable knowledge related to the role of calcium in myocardial and vascular smooth muscle contractions, the pacemaker activity in physiological and pathological conditions, allowing a much better understanding of the cardiovascular indications of this very attractive group of drugs. Finally, it is of special interest to find a classification of these drugs in relation to their specificity in affecting the calcium channel. Dr. Fleckenstein proposed classifying the calcium antagonists in three groups: Group A, specific calcium antagonists including verapamil, nifedipine, their derivatives, and diltiazem; Group B, calcium antagonists also affecting the movement of sodium including prenylamine, terodiline, fendiline, perhexiline, and caroverine; Group C, substances with calcium antagonistic side effects, including nitroglycerin, barbituric acid, etc. Such classification is based on a number of pharmacological criteria. There are so many drugs claimed to be specific calcium antagonists, but also interfere with movements of other ions.

This book is recommended as a major source of information concerning the pharmacological properties of calcium antagonists.

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Nicotinic Acid: Nutrient–Cofactor–Drug. (Clinical Pharmacology Series, Vol. 1). By MURRAY WEINER and JAN VAN EYS. Marcel Dekker, 270 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016. 1983. 308 pp. 16 × 24 cm. Price $55.00 (20% higher outside the U.S. and Canada).

This monograph provides a synthesis of existing knowledge from a wide variety of sources into a single, concise volume. Topics are not examined in excessive detail, but that was not a purpose of the book. Rather, it emerges as a strength in that it permits the diverse audience addressed to be informed readily in areas beyond particular disciplinary constraints. An index and extensive references facilitate acquisition of detailed information on the topics covered for interested readers. The book succeeds well in crossing disciplinary boundaries, and it frequently reveals provocative possibilities for future research. Exposition, organized by sections according to the title, is acceptably comprehensive and includes such newer developments as the nicotinamide coenzymes as donors in transribosylation reactions and in regulation of DNA repair and synthesis, use of nicotinic acid in cardiovascular and hyperlipidemic diseases (including pharmacokinetics and pharmacodynamics), and reexamination of the tryptophan-nicotinic acid relationship in a world in which protein hunger is a global problem of growing concern. For example, nonspecialists who identify pellagra with a simple niacin-tryptophan deficiency will be enlightened by the very first chapter.

The roles of nicotinic acid at the metabolic level are manifold. The most vital function of living material—the capacity to abstract and utilize energy from complex molecules—requires controlled oxidations linked to the nicotinic acid-derived coenzymes. Moreover, NAD participates in the generation of adenosine diphosphate robose polymers, which have a role in DNA metabolism and function. Indeed, in its coenzyme forms the physiological roles of nicotinic acid are pervasive and pivotal in the subcellular compartments of cytoplasm, nucleus, mitochondrion, and endoplasmic reticulum. The authors aver that "there are few areas of biochemistry in which pharmacology, nutritional biochemistry, and molecular biology are interwoven in such a coherent whole." Their monograph amply illuminates that statement. This overview of nicotinic acid and its variety of chemical and metabolic derivatives includes important biochemical, nutritional, pharmacological, and clinical aspects. In addition to life scientists and practitioners in those fields, the book should appeal to dieticians, pharmacists, and others interested in a concise and authoritative exposition of the functions and relationships of this critical cog in the metabolic machinery. It is an excellent contemporary reference for courses in all these disciplines, and it will be at home on laboratory benches due to its durable, stain-resistant binding.

There are relatively few printing errors and oversights for a first printing. Minor misspellings and errors in figures, such as the entry of the symbol for oxygen for that of coenzyme Q and a misplaced arrow (p. 219) and an exotically appended CO_2 on the NAM molecule (p. 19), are neither overly distracting nor misleading. Of somewhat more concern are the use of "niacin" in the second paragraph of p. 9 when "niacytin" is intended and strange displacements such as "substitutes" for "substrates" (p. 217).

This monograph is the first volume in a projected series in clinical pharmacology under the general editorial direction of Dr. Weiner. Three decades of distinguished research in many of the aspects of the metabolic roles of these compounds by Professor van Eys are evident in the clarity and insightful coverage which characterize this volume. If succeeding volumes maintain those qualities we will have much to look forward to and a wide audience stands much to gain.

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