

Book Review

Low Molecular Weight Heparins in Clinical Practice

Edited by Christian Doutrèmequich

Published 1992 Marcel Dekker Inc., New York

264 pages

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\$114.50 all other countries

Low molecular weight heparins (LMWHs) belong to the forefront of new pharmacological antithrombotic agents. Extensive basic pharmacological and clinical work has been carried out on the area of LMWHs. However, LMWHs remain a widespread field of research mainly because of their individuality.

The fifteen chapters, from laboratories around the world, are arranged in logical sequence starting from the chemistry of heparin itself and the low molecular weight fragments, and culminating in the clinical use of commercial products. The authors' involvement in such diverse fields leads to some repetition and some omissions, but there is also much valuable interpretation and discussion of up-to-date research.

This book highlights the biological and clinical actions of LMWHs. In a short but comprehensive way the book describes the possible mechanisms behind the antithrombotic-anticoagulant actions of LMWHs and the reasons that their biological activities depend upon the preparation from the paternal conventional heparins (UFHs). In addition, information is given regarding the effects of LMWHs on blood cells and vascular endothelium. However, no data are given on the effects of LMWHs on the vascular smooth muscle cells and their actions on arterial thrombosis and atherosclerosis.

The language is occasionally not quite smooth; however, the book provides well-documented data of the existing differences

between LMWHs and UFHs regarding their pharmacokinetics and bioavailabilities, and the way that the biological monitoring of LMWHs should be made. In general, the book informs the reader thoroughly about the current conception of the use of LMWHs in the prevention and treatment of venous thromboembolism especially deep vein thrombosis (DVT). The well-documented conclusions of the book are based on reported clinical trials which aimed to inhibit the clot extension and to achieve clot lysis on confirmed DVTs. In addition, the optimal dosages and the way of adjustment for the current available LMWHs regarding their use in surgical and medical practice for treatment and prophylaxis against DVTs are given in detail. Furthermore, the concluded optimal dosages are reported in consideration with the haemorrhagic risk and cost effectiveness. Finally, the authors highlight the tremendous individuality of each LMWH and call for further clinical and laboratory research because the monitoring of the treatment of LMWHs with the available laboratory tests cannot always predict unresponsiveness of risk of complications. This book, therefore, is strongly recommended for medical doctors involved in the treatment and prevention of venous thromboembolism.

For those clinical scientists who are not familiar with the use of LMWHs, the book will provide basic knowledge in the area of LMWHs, which will be completed through the provided references. The book will also be a very useful tool for doctors who already use LMWHs in their clinical practice. This is because the book, summarizing the current conceptions of the clinical implications of LMWHs, will provide considerations regarding their monitoring in order to increase their effectiveness.

EFFIE MELISSARI
THROMBOSIS RESEARCH INSTITUTE, LONDON, UK

Book Review

A Handbook on Drug and Alcohol Abuse. The Biomedical Aspects. Third Edition

Edited by Gail Winger, Frederick G. Hofmann and James H. Woods

Published 1992 Oxford University Press, Oxford

219 pages

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This book brings together information on the epidemiology, pharmacology and clinical effects of abused substances in a concise and readable format. After a broad introduction to the subject, successive chapters deal with tobacco, opioids, alcohol, sedatives, volatile substances, hallucinogens, amphetamines, cannabis and cocaine. Further chapters describe the medical diagnosis of drug abuse; management of overdose and withdrawal and various aspects of drug abuse and American law.

This is first and foremost a book for medical students and physicians and the main emphasis is therefore on the clinical

aspects of substance abuse. However, the sections covering pharmacological and metabolic data are relevant to this readership and those requiring deeper knowledge are provided with comprehensive lists of references.

There are one or two defects, for example MDMA ('ecstasy') is singled out as a 'designer drug' even though it had a legitimate use in treating obesity as far back as 1914. In contrast, true designer drugs such as the fentanyl derivatives are scarcely mentioned. Alcohol, despite featuring in the title and being second only to tobacco in the most abused substance league, fails to merit an individual chapter.

The presentation itself is rather dull with no photographic illustrations, no tables and a bare minimum of graphical data. This is offset to a large extent by the authoritative and well-written text.

B. WIDDOP
GUY'S HOSPITAL, UK