Professor Glenn Langer has produced a brief but very useful book entitled “Understanding Disease” that should help patients understand cardiovascular diseases, become more knowledgeable, and have the ability to participate in the treatment of their own diseases. The book, which is 192 pages in length, has 8 chapters with the following titles: “Heart Attack,” “Heart Failure,” “Conduction Failure,” “Calcium and Digitalis Therapies,” “Respiratory Failure,” “Problems in the Vessels,” “Problems in the Blood,” and “Drugs for the Circulation.” Dr Langer uses specific patient examples to introduce each of the areas that he covers in his text. Patients and their presenting symptoms are used to heighten reader interest in each of the topics he covers. He then describes the causes of the medical problem, the physiology of that problem in lay terms so that the lay person can understand it easily, and finally the treatment. As a practicing physician, I am impressed by the easy-to-understand and real-life approach to the description of each of these topics. I think that patients and their families will be able to understand specific cardiovascular abnormalities very well after reading a chapter of special interest.

Professor Langer has provided cardiovascular medicine with a great deal of what we know about calcium, digitalis, and heart failure, and he introduces his own contributions in these areas in a very nice manner. The book also contains interesting information on the history of medicine, including details of major medical discoveries and the scientists who were involved in them, as well as the identification of Nobel Prize winners in the appropriate chapters with descriptions of their pioneering work.

I recommend this book for patients with cardiovascular disease and for their families and friends as an authoritative source for information related to specific cardiovascular problems. It is presented in a manner that is easy to understand and one that should be very useful. I think the book will allow patients and their family and friends to ask knowledgeable questions of their physicians and fully participate in the therapeutic regimens that are developed.

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Understanding Disease: How Your Heart, Lungs, Blood, and Blood Vessels Function and Respond to Treatment

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