Professor Hein J.J. Wellens: 33 Years of Cardiology and Arrhythmology
Joep L.R.M. Smeets, ed.

This book is a collection of articles that Professor Hein J.J. Wellens authored or coauthored and published between the years 1967 and 1999; it spans the illustrious career of one of the true giants of cardiac electrophysiology. What adds an invaluable extra dimension to this volume are the editorial-style comments following many of the original articles that were written for this textbook by many European and North American clinical cardiac electrophysiologists, who are internationally prominent clinician-scientists themselves and whose lives and careers have been touched by Professor Wellens in one way or another.

This book should be part of the required reading for every young aspiring clinical cardiac electrophysiologist for historical and for scientific reasons. First of all, the wide spectrum of articles show that Professor Wellens’ scientific interest and curiosity extended into every aspect of clinical electrophysiology. Although the articles based on data from the cardiac electrophysiology laboratory predominate, there is a wealth of information from electrocardiography to epidemiology, basic cardiac electrophysiology to clinical pharmacology, noninvasive techniques to implantable devices stretching over >30 years of writing and publishing.

What is most remarkable about this collection is the seminal nature of the several earlier articles in the collection. As repeatedly acknowledged by the other investigators in their editorial comments that follow the papers, these landmark articles made a durable impact in shaping the scientific and clinical thinking of an entire generation of cardiac electrophysiologists. This is the most authentic way to get an introduction to the history of clinical electrophysiology.

These articles, however, should not be read just for the historical perspective they provide. The early articles especially should also be read to get an education in scientific thinking in clinical cardiology, to learn how to collect data meticulously for clinical investigation, and to learn lessons in clarity of thinking and reasoning.

Technically, the absence of an index is a minor shortcoming of the volume. I would have liked to see an index of subject material, even if not long and all-inclusive. Given the format of this book, indexing may not be easy. However, this book does not necessarily have to be read from cover to cover as a historical document. Since it is also invaluable as a reference book, any indexing effort might have helped.

In summary, this collection of writings by Professor Wellens is a timely book providing a perspective of what has been accomplished in the young science of cardiac electrophysiology over the past 3 decades. What better way to pay tribute to this giant of Maastricht than with a collection of his scientific output, including his groundbreaking contributions?

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