BOOK REVIEWS


The second volume of Progress in Cardiology has a total of ten chapters. There are six contributors from the United States, two from the United Kingdom, and two from Europe. Together, these contributors present several interesting topics pertaining to cardiovascular problems.

The first chapter by Drs. Taylor and Barrow deals with recent advances in genetics. The authors have discussed genetic influences in responses to cardiovascular drugs, genetic contribution to various cardiovascular and systemic disorders and familial rhythm disturbances in just 22 pages. The discussion on immunological aspects by Drs. Roberts and Lessof brings out some interesting facts about autoimmune reactions and immune mechanisms of cardiovascular disease.

The best part of the book is the next four chapters. The discussion on digitalis by Drs. Smith and Haber deals in detail with various assay techniques, the relationship between serum digitalis concentration and toxicity, and comments on clinical pharmacology. This chapter is a must for every reader using or interested in cardiac glycosides. Progress in screening hypoplastic left ventricle, asplenia syndrome, transposition, Ebstein's anomaly by non-invasive techniques is followed by a detailed and brilliant account of anatomy, physiology, natural history, and treatment of selected congenital disorders. This chapter on congenital heart is written by Dr. Oakley. The next chapter deals with anatomy, physiology, types and management of dysrhythmias in the pediatric population and is excellently written by Drs. Engle and Ehlers. Drs. Damato, Schnitzler and Lau then go on to bring us the recent advances in the bundle of His electrogrograms with superb illustrations. I believe that the above chapters are of highest quality and should prove to be useful to students, house-officers and clinicians alike.

The pathophysiology and medical therapy of shock is discussed by Drs. Cohn, Franciosa, Perlooth and Harrison. The concluding chapters by Drs. Wahren and Grimby deal with substrate utilization by exercising muscle and physical training in cardiac patients. The above four chapters are well written and are informative.

This book is recommended to interested house-officers, internists and cardiologists.


Family physicians, cardiologists, hospitals, and relatives of patients with heart disease, as well as the patient himself, should find this manual useful in helping persons with a first diagnosis of heart disease understand what causes their condition and how they can adjust to it. The text, the result of a happy collaboration of medical expertise and writing ability, is highly readable, clear, and concise. Analogies from the everyday world enliven the discussion of medical aspects of the disease. Medical jargon is largely absent. The reader-patient is treated sympathetically but as an intelligent adult. He is spared the familiar procession of health mishaps from the imaginary lives of Mr. A and Mrs. B. Instead, the anecdotes interspersed in the discussions are about people in public life—even well-known cardiologists—and reassure the reader of how many people have successfully compensated for a less than perfectly functioning heart.

Statistics are given on the relationship of smoking, diets high in cholesterol, overwhelming stress patterns, and other risk factors to the occurrence and rate of progression of heart trouble. But the reader is not lectured. Rather he is given some practical suggestions and realistic goals for diet, exercise, and improved mental attitude. The chapters on exercise and mental health are stronger than the section on diet, which has a good general discussion, but adds only a limited and disappointing list of cookbooks.

The illustrations, while lacking much verve, are clear and make their point immediately. One wishes, however, that the lively, simple writing style had been accompanied by a more imaginative format and especially by the selection of a larger, more readable type size.

In all, this manual would be a useful extension to the physician's final bedside talk before releasing a patient. It fills in information and anticipates future questions of the patient and reaches into those areas of everyday personal life, changes in which can be crucial for adding productive years to his life.

Lou Ann Brower


This slender book contains the proceedings of a symposium devoted to the potential application of modern diagnostic techniques for the preclinical detection of coronary disease for prophylactic management. It is international in flavor and contains a characteristic critical review by the late Charles K.
Freidberg and by Gunnar Björk. The subject matter is quite comprehensive and includes a consideration of the natural history of clinical and preclinical coronary disease, the significance of arterial obstructive lesions, coronary arteriography, hyperlipidemia, impaired carbohydrate tolerance, psychological factors, the exercise ECG, apex-cardiography and coronary flow assessment by radioangiography. It does not cover echocardiography, systolic time intervals and some other potentially useful techniques.

This compendium does not suffer from the usual heterogeneity of experience, viewpoints, and writing skill of its numerous contributors and is in the main lucidly and concisely written and well illustrated.

The text is disappointing in one aspect. It does not provide a state of the art summary of the practical evaluation of coronary vulnerability to help the practicing physician much in the office evaluation of susceptibility or in the identification of presumptomatic persons with occult coronary disease. However, there is much of interest in it for physicians who have an interest in prevention of coronary disease. It is reasonably up to date and will acquaint physicians with the utility of some techniques (i.e., apex-cardiography).

William B. Kannel, M.D.


This is the 7th edition of this popular book begun in 1957. Each subsequent issue has become larger (200 pages longer this edition than 6th edition) and has had more contributors (40 contributors this edition). In common with the past edition, the literature period covered by this volume (1968–71) is in addition to a summary of the reports appearing in previous volumes which are cross-referenced in the text.

In general, this book is only useful as an annotated bibliography to give an interested reader a lead into the literature regarding unwanted effects of drugs. The text itself is too superficial to give any real appreciation of the gravity or frequency of the numerous problems listed. Usually no effort is made to indicate what percent of patients will have side effects or what doses are likely to produce unwanted effects. Although the preface states that the contributors were to be critical and include only documented unwanted effects, such is not always evident from the text. Trivial as well as important unwanted effects are given equal weight without judgment by the authors. Rarely is a mechanism (i.e. allergic vs pharmacologic effects) mentioned in regard to the side effect and no indication of the rational therapy of the side effect is given. Some of the effects of drugs are not even side effects in man such as the "mutagenic effects" of caffeine in cells grown in tissue culture. This sort of "side effect" should be listed as speculative at best.

The book lacks a consistency in regard to style as well as content. Occasionally contributors have included drug interactions in their chapters. For example, the chapter on antidepressant drugs has a number of interactions, some of which are described only in mice. In addition, the authors leave out the well-documented interactions of tricyclic antidepressant drugs with the quinidine-containing antihypertensives, quinidine and bethanidine, which have been documented numerous times in man. Drug interactions should probably not be included in a book of this sort which is already rapidly becoming too long.

An interesting and useful section of the book is the chapters on radiological contrast media and unclassified drugs which include diagnostic agents (e.g. Bromsulphalein), intravenous fluids and a variety of agents to which patients are exposed. The effects of these substances are hard to find in many standard texts but are rather well covered here.

A caution to American readers: The generic names used in this country are not necessarily the same names included in the book. For instance, meperidine is listed under pethidine and acetaminophen is listed under paracetamol. Fortunately, in this edition, there is an extensive table of proprietary names and their equivalents which are used in this text.

All in all, this text is a useful reference source as a guide to the literature with the following proviso: The reader must look up the references and judge for himself whether the unwanted effect is worthy of further study.

Alan S. Nies, M.D.
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http://circ.ahajournals.org/content/48/3/667.citation

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