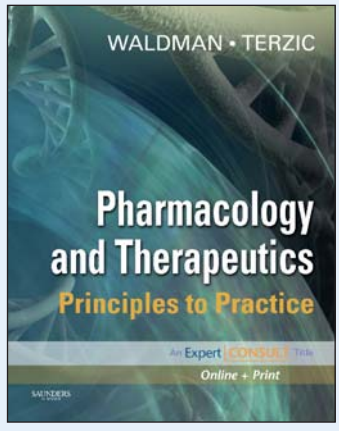
Pharmacology and Therapeutics: Principles to Practice

Scott Waldman, Andre Terzic
Saunders Elsevier 2009
Price £87.99. Pp 1536
ISBN 978 1 41603 291 5

Knowledge of drug actions and interactions remains a core skill for the vast majority of medical practitioners, and consequently pharmacology remains a fundamental component of the medical school curriculum the world over.

This new text, edited by two very prominent figures in pharmacology, sets out to marry our evolving understanding of molecular biology, physiology, biochemistry with the actions (wanted and unwanted) of drugs.

The first section of the book delivers the concepts underpinning pharmacology in a conventional fashion; principles, pharmacokinetics, pharmacodynamics, drug development and so on. The second section tackles clinical pharmacology in a systems-oriented manner, again something which is common place in modern pharmacology texts. So far, not particularly exciting. What does make this book inspiring, however, is the fact it has been superbly written and edited; the narrative is so easy to read that it makes extracting the information from the pages almost effortless. In addition, every chapter is supported by a good selection of references to original research and review articles, both old and new, and the whole text is available online allowing it to be accessed wherever there is an internet connection.

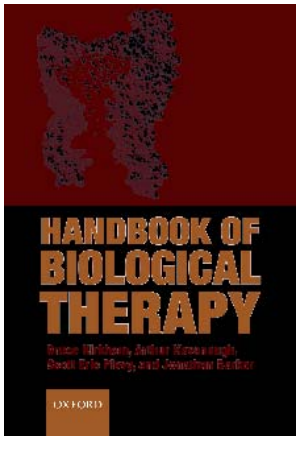


Written principally by American authors, this book will primarily appeal to the American market; words such as paracetamol and adrenaline cannot be found on any of its 1500 pages. It will have great appeal for senior medical students, for junior doctors preparing for examinations, for senior clinicians involved in teaching and delivering health care, and for libraries and other academic institutions.

James S Dawson, Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust

Handbook of Biological Therapy

Bruce Kirkham, Arthur Kavanaugh, Scott Eric Plevy and Jonathan Barker
Oxford University Press 2008
Price £24.95. Pp 155
ISBN 978 0 19 920816 6



We are experiencing the 'biological revolution' with an explosion of new biological therapies for long-term inflammatory diseases like arthritis, colitis and a range of skin problems. Biologics are effective, particularly in active disease, and stand head and shoulders above conventional treatments. Regrettably they are limited by cost, the need for injections and increased risk of infections.

This handbook is written by four leading experts in the field who span three continents – Australia, Europe and North America. Two are rheumatologists, one is a dermatologist and the fourth is a gastroenterologist. All of them are well known in their respective fields. The book is introduced by the President of EULAR – the European League Against Rheumatism.

This book has a unique structure. It starts off by outlining safety and then describes the use of biologics in rheumatology, dermatology and gastroenterology. While reasonable – as safety links these three clinical areas – it is an unusual approach. However, the book is written as a practical manual rather than something to read from cover to cover and so it can be used to dip in and out of in an informal manner.

Each section contains details on the key trials and is supported by a detailed evidence list. Its Achilles heel will be the pace of advance, which is accelerating for biologics. A fixed book will soon fall behind the information cascade in this area. Nevertheless it will prove invaluable to a range of health-care professionals involved in treating these disorders.

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A-Z of Plastic Surgery

Andrew Hodges
Oxford University Press 2008
Price £26.95. Pp 320
ISBN 978 0 19 954657 2

This is a book that will clearly divide the audience that it is aimed towards; its robust, factual and comprehensive style will appeal to some, whereas its illustrative-less, dictionary-like style will put off others. However, after spending a little time acquainting myself with this text, I do not think it has to be as black or white as first impressions may seem.

The author has provided over 2000 entries for the plastic surgery trainee to digest, admirably covering the basic science topics of anatomy, physiology and pathology through to clinical conditions and surgical techniques. Although the book might appear to follow a monotonous dictionary-like order, there is excellent cross-referencing of the text, with each entry appropriately subdivided making reading and recall easier. In addition the author enlightens the reader with useful historical notes throughout the book, with my personal highlight being the brief but very interesting entry on the 'History of plastic surgery'.

What can not be avoided when reviewing this book is the lack of diagrams and illustrations, especially when certain entries would be better understood in such format. However, this pocketbook does exactly what it claims to; it is an easy to use reference guide that allows the quick assimilation of knowledge on key topics.

For the plastic surgery trainee this book would probably best serve as an adjunct to a more comprehensive illustrated textbook, but it can be easily carried and referred to during everyday clinical practice.

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