

How Drugs Work (3rd edn)

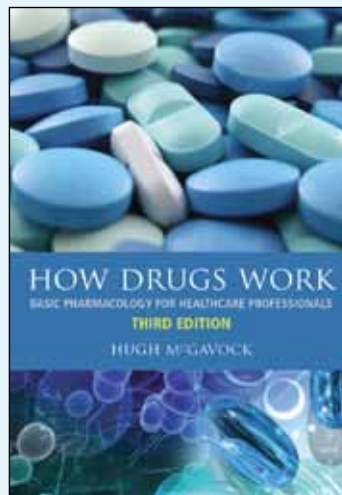
Hugh McGavock
Radcliffe Publishing 2011
Price £24.99. Pp 204
ISBN 9781846194788

This third edition of *How Drugs Work* is an excellent introduction to basic pharmacology. In the first chapters, core concepts regarding drug absorption and metabolism are clearly explained in a step-by-step fashion. Examples are used to illustrate key points to further enhance the reader's understanding, and use of summary boxes ensures these are succinctly highlighted at the end of each chapter.

The book also covers the mechanisms of commonly used drugs and includes basic physiology, thereby ensuring the reader understands the rationale for pre-

scribing. Diagrams that are easy to interpret are used throughout the book to enhance comprehension of the written material, although the use of colour would perhaps improve this further. Furthermore, tables are provided to deliver information to the reader in an accessible manner rather than a list format.

The latter chapters, however, lack sufficient detail to give the reader in-depth knowledge of the prescribing rationale for specific medications such as antipsychotics and drugs for Alzheimer's disease. Nevertheless, the



author does provide references where further knowledge can be gained if required.

This book would be extremely useful to health-care students approaching qualification. GPs, junior doctors and nurse practitioners would also find this a useful adjunct to the *British National Formulary* when prescribing. It is also competitively priced in comparison to similar texts on offer. Overall, this is an excellent introductory text which would be a valuable investment for trainees and doctors alike.
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Handbook of Surgical Consent

Edited by Rajesh Nair, David J Holroyd
Oxford University Press 2012
Price £34.99. Pp 738
ISBN 978 0 19 959558 7

This new addition to the extensive Oxford Medical Handbook series is intended to provide those who gain consent with the necessary information to conduct this process effectively. The book is wide-ranging, covering a total of twenty-one separate surgical specialities including obstetrics and neonatal surgery.

There is an excellent first chapter which covers the principles governing consent, illustrated with the relevant case law. Thereafter, each chapter describes between 5 and 25 procedures, each presented using a format which mirrors the standard consent form with which all will be familiar. Each operation is described and often illustrated with good quality line drawings. The complications of each procedure are reported in a number of formats, supported by varying levels of evidence ranging from meta-analysis to case series. In some cases, however, frequencies are not cited.

I would congratulate the editors for compiling such a comprehensive volume and I have often felt that such a book would be of great utility. However, few will require such a broad range of information and those who do probably ought not to be seeking to consent patients given

that they are likely to be at the beginning of their careers.

Nevertheless, the book does provide a concise summary of the most pertinent features of all common surgical procedures and as such would provide a very useful source for revision at a junior level. It does not cater for the discussions that a more senior trainee would hope to conduct with enquiring patients during the process of consent.

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Oxford Handbook of Practical Drug Therapy (2nd edn)

Duncan Richards, Jamie Coleman,
John Reynolds, Jeffrey Aronson
Oxford University Press 2012
Price £27.99. Pp 795
ISBN 978 0 19 956285 5

Few junior doctors in the UK do not own at least one of the 'Oxford Handbook' series. There's currently over fifty of them, and this volume covers pharmacology. It opens with a section on the principles of pharmacology and practical prescribing, including best practice on how to avoid drug errors. It then follows with chapters organized by organ system. Every drug or group of drugs has a 1–2-page monograph discussing its presumed mechanism of action, indications, side effects, interactions, efficacy and sometimes an illustrative case vignette.

Learning points are provided in context, e.g. correct use of metered dose inhalers for asthma. The content is mapped to the *British National Formulary* at the top of each page, to National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence guidelines, and to other important resources relevant to clinical practice in the UK. It pulls together knowledge from many sources that might otherwise be hard to access, such as lists of drugs to avoid in patients with glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase (G6PD) deficiency or porphyria.

Why invest in this book? The intended audience for this handbook is clearly broad, but the book contains information useful for all grades of practice. This handbook provides an excellent practical framework for brushing up on pharmacology knowledge in a didactically useful format. It is rich in diagrams and tables. Apart from for personal use, it might be a useful resource on wards where many different drugs are prescribed, such as an acute medical unit.

Who should not buy this book? A lot of the information is available elsewhere, in some form or another, and the main ways of deriving benefit from its content are either to actively look up a drug when prescribing it or while revising for exams. It also focuses predominantly on current practice in the UK, and is therefore less useful for those working abroad.

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