Pharmaceutical Medicine—Second Edition

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There is no precise definition of the subject Pharmaceutical Medicine. While it encompasses the medical aspects of the work of the pharmaceutical industry and is thus involved with the process of drug discovery and development, it also includes legal aspects of medicine especially those of drug regulation. Thus any textbook with the title Pharmaceutical Medicine must cover a large number of topics.

This book was originally designed to help doctors in industry who were preparing for the Diploma in Pharmaceutical Medicine which was set up in 1976 by the three Colleges of Physicians in the United Kingdom. The first edition was published in 1985 as a multi-author text under the joint editorship of Denis Burley and Terry Binns. The book clearly filled a need and some 8 years on the second edition has been drastically changed, reflecting not only the advance of medical science and alterations in drug regulations (especially those affecting Europe) but also the emerging importance of pharmacoepidemiology, pharmacoeconomics and ethics. Two new sections deserve special mention. First an excellent chapter on statistics written by Win Castle and Alan Ebbutt has been added and this not only takes the reader into the most fundamental aspects of the subject but also deals with mathematical aspects of clinical trial design. A fascinating chapter on legal aspects of pharmaceutical medicine details the new issues faced by the doctor not only in industry but in any branch of medical practice. I considered this contribution by Diana Brahams quite outstanding. Overall the editors have purposely invited many new authors to contribute and this has given the book a pleasing freshness.

Does the book commend itself to those outside the pharmaceutical industry or does it remain merely the approved reading for the industry initiate? The selection of the topics would strongly suggest the latter; moreover the book has a strong international flavour reflecting the multinational nature of the industry. Chapters such as Issues in the Economics of the Pharmaceutical Industry and the Pharmaceutical Physician are clearly targeted at a specialist audience. Other sections, however, such as those on Drug Discovery, Preclinical Toxicity Testing, Clinical Trials and Adverse Reactions have relevance for a wider audience in clinical pharmacology. For those interested in drug regulation, there are chapters describing the present situation in the United Kingdom and the United States and one looking forward to the proposed European structure. The chapter on legal aspects described above should be required reading for every doctor.

The great sadness about this book, of course, is that the principal author, Denis Burley, died before the second edition was published. As his many friends know, Denis made a huge contribution to the subject of pharmaceutical medicine and the status of the pharmaceutical physician. His co-authors Joan Clarke and Lou Lasagna have done a splendid job in ensuring that this text is a suitable memorial to him.

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