A Textbook of Pharmaceutical Medicine Current Practice

Edited by R. D. MANN, M. D. RAWLINS & R. M. AUTY
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This the third book about pharmaceutical medicine published in the last year. The titles are very similar and their contents have much in common but, since most of the authors are different, all three books make distinct contributions. A Textbook of Pharmaceutical Medicine is divided into ten sections. The section on historical aspects is a little superficial and failure to mention the American Food and Drug Administration seems a rather large omission from a chapter about the historical development of medicines regulations. The next section on new drug development comprises almost half the book. After a helpful overview of the drug development process, discovery and preclinical development are covered reasonably comprehensively with a discussion of strategy and choice of R&D projects and the role of chemistry, biochemistry and pharmacology. The important subject of pharmaceutical development is covered very briefly. A chapter on toxicology concentrates on mechanisms of toxicity with particular emphasis on importance of metabolites but it does not address many of the difficult issues that pharmaceutical physicians and others in the industry frequently have to make about no-effect doses, relative drug exposures and the basis for go/no go decisions. The clinical development part of this section begins with an excellent chapter on the clinical development plan and subsequent chapters cover clinical pharmacology and clinical trials, good clinical practice and finally a valuable contribution on preparation of the marketing authorisation application. The chapter on clinical pharmacokinetics covers some principles of the subject but does not really come to grips with the importance of pharmacokinetics in the regulatory dossier and the role that new developments in this area can play in evaluation of dose/plasma concentration/effect relationships in the treated population. Topics such as drug interaction studies and special patient groups are inadequately covered.

The rest of the book comprises a number of shorter sections on all aspects of the pharmaceutical industry. Chapters on medical statistics, regulatory systems in Europe and the US and medical economics and healthcare delivery systems are appropriate for a book of this type. Methods of collecting adverse drug reaction data including monitoring, spontaneous reporting, case control and cohort studies are described with some good tables and examples. On the other hand, many chapters contain few (if any) illustrations or tables which makes the going heavy at times. A number of chapters are rather disjointed and would have benefited from amalgamation. With a few exceptions, most chapters would be more readable with greater use of subheadings and lists of bullet points to break up the text. Some chapters are referenced adequately, others less so and the index is very short which greatly diminishes its utility.

In the Preface the editors state that the book has been written for those entering the speciality of pharmaceutical medicine, for pharmaceutical physicians wishing to continue their education and for a wider audience of physicians, clinical pharmacologists and pharmacists wishing to increase their knowledge and understanding of the principles underlying pharmaceutical medicine. Some excellent chapters will undoubtedly prove useful to pharmaceutical physicians in the industry studying for the Diploma of Pharmaceutical Medicine. It is less certain whether this text will stimulate the interest of those outside the industry perhaps thinking of entering it. Retailing at over £80, this book will have difficulty in competing with other recently published texts.

J. POSNER & S. G. GRIFFITH
Wellcome Research Laboratories,
Langley Court,
Beckenham,
Kent BR3 3BS