The Anesthesiologist’s Bookshelf


This biennial stalwart in the field of therapeutics opens with chapters which briefly but adequately present important basic pharmacologic principles. Adverse drug reactions are covered in a separate chapter, which includes a comprehensive list of important drugs with the commonly reported side-effects of each. In addition, adverse reactions are well presented in those chapters in which the therapeutic uses of the drugs are discussed. The chapters on groups of drugs or drugs used in management of specific diseases include enough pharmacology to give an understanding of the choice of a therapeutic agent, but the emphasis clearly is on therapy. The interested physician will get much help from this text, not only in making his decision whether or not to prescribe a drug, but also in how to use the drug, the initial dose, the continuing daily dose, and the duration of treatment. Chapters of special interest to anesthesiologists are devoted to stimulants of mental and physical activity (Heath and Tomlinson), medullary stimulants (Vandam), analgesics (Halpern and Bonica), anesthetics (Artusio), tranquilizers and sedatives (Sweet), hypnotics (Lasagna), antiemetics (Bellville), drugs for arterial hypotension and shock (Vandam). The book continues to provide the drug index, which is a valuable reference when one has the proprietary name of a drug but needs to know the generic one. Drugs of Choice again offers sound, timely therapeutic advice to practicing physicians.

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Although this interesting book was written primarily for physicians and medical students interested in the renal contribution to acid–base balance, it should also be read by any physician who is responsible for the diagnosis and treatment of respiratory insufficiency. A comprehensive overview of the historic tenets of acid–base physiology and the pertinent developments in this field during the last two decades are presented in a concise, readable form. The review of contemporary acid–base theory is particularly clear and should be useful to those who have not followed the recent advances in this field. The respiratory contribution to the acid–base balance and the basic control mechanisms of respiration are briefly reviewed and related to the renal mechanisms of compensating for respiratory abnormalities. The restoration of pH by the kidneys and the countercurrent theory of renal physiology are presented accurately. Throughout the book, as in the author’s recent publications, the use of the pH measurement is defended as the most sensitive clinical test of acid–base balance rather than the concentration of the serum hydroxion ion. The discussion of the buffer systems of the blood and extravascular fluid illuminate the current controversies over the best clinical method to assess the capacity of the body to buffer acidic and basic loads. The clinical significance and limitations of serum bicarbonate concentration, standard bicarbonate, and base excess measurements are reviewed and clarified. Clear language is used throughout the book, and the material is presented logically. For these reasons, as well as the reasonable price, the book should become a standard reference text in the field of clinical medicine.

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The aim of this book is to produce a new and integrated approach to pathology, physiology, and internal medicine which will provide the reader with an insight into the complex interrelationships that exist in any disease process, such an insight being essential to the rational and scientific practice of medicine.

The book unfortunately fails to live up to this aim. To encompass the fields of three major specialities and draw them together in an integrated whole within the space of 755 pages is beyond the capabilities of most of the authors. All too often, one sees the following words actually written or else implied: "In the space available only a few short examples of pathophysiological processes can be introduced."

If one chooses to regard this book as a textbook of physiology with an emphasis on clinicopathologic states it is, however, an undoubted success. The style is easy to read, the content factual, interesting, and up-to-date. The annotated references are of great value, as are the frequent and excellent diagrams. In places the authors have introduced novel ways of examining complex physiologic mechanisms which are quite enlightening.

This book will be of value to the medical student and to the resident in any speciality who seeks a general overview of the physiology and some related clinicopathology of the entire patient with whom we must deal. To the specialist-anesthesiologist in these days of superspecialization, this book has a much more limited appeal. Books such as Nunn’s “Applied Respiratory Physiology” set a standard for the anes-