

Drugs of Choice: a Formulary for General Practice, third revision.

Levine M, Lexchin J, Pellizzari R. Canadian Medical Association, Ottawa, Ontario, 1998. Softcover, 334 pages. \$24.95. [also available on diskette]

Drugs of Choice is intended as a problem-oriented prescribing guide for primary care physicians. Organized by body system, from cardiovascular to respiratory, it lists what the authors have determined to be the most appropriate drug therapy for 194 clinical problems managed in the ambulatory care setting.

One of the strengths of this reference book is the manner in which the information is organized. The clinical problems are presented as subheadings within each body system. For each problem, an initial section entitled “Drugs of choice” lists the relevant drugs (along with the usual adult dose), presented by generic name and grouped by therapeutic classification. A comparison based on the daily cost of the average dose is included. For situations where there are only 4 therapeutically equivalent drugs, the authors have elected to list all 4 drugs; for clinical problems for which there are more than 4 equivalent drugs, only the 3 least expensive drugs are listed. The next subheading, “Second-line therapies”, is organized in the same manner. The authors have also established levels of evidence for their

recommendations, another helpful guide for the user. The A and B levels of evidence are based on the strength of supporting literature or other documentation. Level C recommendations are based on the opinions of experts in the field. “Additional instructions and notes” follow the drug therapy listings, and each subsection concludes with the cited references.

There are several limitations to this formulary. Drug classification terms, such as “dihydropyridine”, are sometimes employed in the “Additional instructions and notes” section without being mentioned in the drug therapy tables. The use of “and” and “or” in the recommendations is sometimes confusing. Because this is a 1998 text, newer drug therapies are missing, such as the atypical antipsychotics. The attempt at brevity sometimes means that useful information is omitted. An example of this situation occurs in the list for hyperlipidemia, where elevated low-density lipoprotein is not defined and the user is referred to two 1996 references. No pharmacist was included among the authors and editors, an omission that is particularly evident in the



doses and dosage regimens, none of which are referenced and some of which are questionable. An example is the section on attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, where once-daily methylphenidate and dextroamphetamine are recommended without citation of the dosage form. Drugs that have been removed from the market, including pemoline and tolcapone, are listed. Information on adjusting drug dosage in renal dysfunction or other clinical situations is not included.

This book could be a useful guide for the hospital pharmacist practising in an ambulatory care setting, a

long-term care unit, or a community hospital. The extensive dermatology section could prove particularly useful. However, the user must keep in mind the 1998 publication date and the limitations that this presents.

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Books Received

Ambulatory Care Asthma Management Module. Kenreigh C, Wagner L. American Society of Health-System Pharmacists, Bethesda, Maryland. ISBN 1-879907-94-1. Softcover, US\$118.95.

Anesthesiology and Critical Care Drug Handbook. Donnelly AJ, Cunningham FE, Baughman VL. Lexi-Comp and American Pharmaceutical Association, Hudson, Ohio. ISBN 0-916589-73-0. Softcover, US\$37.95.

Drug-Induced Nutrient Depletion Handbook. Pelton R, LaValle JB, Hawkins EB, Krinsky DL. Lexi-Comp and American Pharmaceutical Association, Hudson, Ohio. ISBN 0-916589-79-X. Softcover, US\$34.95.

Drug Information Handbook, 8th edition. Lacy CF, Armstrong LL, Goldman MP, Lance LL. Lexi-Comp and American Pharmaceutical Association, Hudson, Ohio. ISBN 0-916589-76-5. Softcover, US\$44.95.

Drug Information Handbook for Advanced Practice Nursing. Smithing R et al. Lexi-Comp, Hudson, Ohio. ISBN 0-916589-75-7. Hardcover, US\$39.95.

Drug Information Handbook for Cardiology. Phillips BG, Somers VK. Lexi-Comp and American Pharmaceutical Association, Hudson, Ohio. ISBN 0-916589-69-2. Softcover, US\$37.95.

Drug Information Handbook for Nursing. Hopkins J. Lexi-Comp, Hudson, Ohio. ISBN 0-916589-82-X. Softcover, US\$34.95.

Drug Information Handbook for Oncology, 2nd edition. Solimando DA, Bressler LR, Kintzel PE, Geraci MC. Lexi-Comp and American Pharmaceutical Association, Hudson, Ohio. ISBN 0-916589-58-7. Softcover, US\$39.95.

Drug Information Handbook for Physician Assistants, 2nd edition. Rudzinski MJ, Bennes JF. Lexi-Comp, Hudson, Ohio. ISBN 0-916589-83-8. Softcover, US\$38.95.

Drug Information Handbook for Psychiatry, 2nd edition. Fuller MA, Sajatovic M. Lexi-Comp and American Pharmaceutical Association, Hudson, Ohio. ISBN 0-916589-92-7. Softcover, US\$39.95.

Geriatric Dosage Handbook, 5th edition. Semla TP, Beizer JL, Higbee MD. Lexi-Comp and American Pharmaceutical Association, Hudson, Ohio. ISBN 0-916589-88-9. Softcover, US\$37.95.

Herbs: Everyday Reference for Health Professionals. Chandler F, editor-in-chief. Canadian Pharmacists Association and Canadian Medical Association, Ottawa, Ontario. ISBN 0-920169-41-4. Softcover, Can\$53.95.

Laboratory Test Handbook (with key word index), 4th edition. Jacobs DS, Horvat RT, DeMott WR, Huestis DW, Grady HJ, Kasten BL Jr. Lexi-Comp, Hudson, Ohio. ISBN 0-916589-36-6. Hardcover, US\$54.75.

Laboratory Test Handbook Concise. Jacobs DS, Horvat RT, DeMott WR, Huestis DW, Grady HJ, Kasten BL Jr. Lexi-Comp, Hudson, Ohio. ISBN 0-916589-29-3. Softcover, US\$31.75.