Pain relief without addiction

PAIN AND ITS RELIEF WITHOUT ADDICTION. CLINICAL ISSUES IN THE USE OF OPIOIDS AND OTHER ANALGESICS

AUTHOR: Barry Stimmel
The Haworth Medical Press, 10 Alice St, Binghampton, NY 13904-1580, USA
1997/420 pp/$49.95 hardcover (US), $24.95 softcover (US)

OVERALL RATING Good
STRENGTHS Clarification of appropriate pain management and how to recognize opioid-dependent individuals
WEAKNESS Too little space devoted to the practical management of pain
AUDIENCE Medical students, residents, and practitioners

Most clinicians will be faced with the problem of pain management. Similarly, most of us must occasionally deal with opioid-dependent individuals. Pain and Its Relief Without Addiction clarifies the basic principles of pain management and clearly introduces the subject of opioid dependence and abuse of other medications by patients with pain. This book provides the reader with greater confidence to handle these sometimes difficult situations.

The first 12 chapters are devoted to pharmacology, neuroanatomy, neurophysiology, drug dependence, and the psychological components of pain; the remaining six chapters tackle the practical issues of clinical management of pain and opioid-dependent individuals. The most difficult concern of patients with pain of undocumented etiology, unfortunately, is given just one page. Many of the earlier chapters are a compilation of facts, without any sense of relevance to clinical practice. There is little to link the text together.

Some interesting subjects are discussed, such as acute tolerance to opioids, physician bias, and impairment. The author assists us to separate the drug-seeking entrepreneur from the patient in legitimate pain. Each chapter concludes with a brief summary, and the book's format enables it to act as a good reference text. There are extensive references.

Professor Stimmel argues impressively for adequately treating patients in pain. Failure to do so often encourages prescription drug abuse. Opioid analgesics are safe and effective if prescribed by knowledgeable caring clinicians who take time to listen to their patients. He stresses that iatrogenic drug dependence is rare. He introduces ways to manage addicted, drug-seeking individuals.

Despite its few shortcomings this book is an invaluable asset to pharmacologists and practising physicians.
— Martyn Judson, MB, CHB, MRCP, CCFP
Dr Judson is in private practice in London, Ont, and specializes in addiction medicine.

Deadly drug interactions

DEADLY DRUG INTERACTIONS. THE PEOPLE'S PHARMACY GUIDE
AUTHORS: Joe Graedon and Teresa Graedon
St. Martin's Press, 175 Fifth Ave, New York, NY 10010 USA
1997/447 pp/$21

OVERALL RATING Average
STRENGTHS Good tables of common reactors and which drugs to take with food, well indexed
WEAKNESSES Necessarily superficial for physicians. Authors' consumerist philosophy is unfair to pharmacists and physicians
AUDIENCE Intended audience is thoughtful patients; actual audience is more likely to be the “all drugs are bad for you, doctors are trying to kill you” brigade

Joe and Teresa Graedon have produced nine other books for consumers on the subject of drugs and host a radio program in the United States called “The People's Pharmacy.” There is obviously a market for this type of publication. Some buyers are concerned about their complex drug