Book review

Anticoagulants, antiplatelets and thrombolytics

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Arterial and venous thrombosis account for a spectrum of common diseases, including myocardial infarction, stroke, deep vein thrombosis and pulmonary embolism, all of which place a major burden of morbidity and mortality on industrialized nations. Consequently, there has been a massive independent and commercial research effort to identify novel antithrombotic strategies for the treatment and prevention of these thrombotic conditions. The historical mainstay of antithrombotic therapy has been aspirin, warfarin and unfractionated heparin, and the last two decades has seen impressive advances on these agents though they continue to dominate the current antithrombotic armamentarium. The aim of this book to summarize advances in this field and provide an overview of methods for assessing antithrombotic drugs is ambitious and the information provided is therefore necessarily selective. The main strength of the book is its overview of novel anticoagulants, including low-molecular-weight heparins, pentasaccharides, direct thrombin inhibitors and tissue factor pathway inhibitor. Two excellent chapters

describe current strategies for the treatment and investigation of heparin-induced thrombocytopenia, a potentially fatal condition predominantly associated with unfractionated heparin therapy. There are also comprehensive overviews of animal models of arterial and venous thrombosis, illustrating the important contribution of these methods to the development of antithrombotic drugs. The overviews of novel antiplatelet drugs and methods of assessment are more limited, reflecting partly the difficulty in summarizing the huge amount of clinical data and the expansion of platelet research methodologies that have arisen over the last decade. There is a chapter devoted to the effects of antiplatelet agents in some *in vitro* flow models of thrombosis, though the clinical utility of any such assays remains to be established and will require critical appraisal. The approach of the book broadens to include overviews of the role of the coagulation system in cancer and cell adhesion molecules as potential therapeutic targets.

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