Book review

The Oxford Handbook of Clinical Pharmacy

Editors Philip Wiffen, Marc Mitchell, Melanie Snelling & Nicola Stoner. Published by OUP, Oxford, 2007, Released: 21 December 2006, 656 pages, 20 line illustrations, 180 × 100 mm, £24.95. ISBN-10: 0-19-856710-3, ISBN-13: 978-0-19-856710-3

In the preface of their 656 pages Oxford Handbook of Clinical Pharmacy, the authors (three clinical pharmacists and a Director of Training at UK Cochrane Centre from Oxford, UK) describe the anecdote of an internationally renowned surgeon (most likely provided by his capable clinical pharmacist) stating that clinical pharmacy was one of the best things anyone had provided him with in his professional career. This illustrates that clinical pharmacy services are only as good as the pharmacists who provide them. Since pharmacotherapy is the most frequently applied medical intervention in current medical practice, many (if not all) physicians are aware of the possibilities and strengths but also of the limitations and risks of prescribing and using drugs. Indeed, clinical pharmacy, aiming at promoting the correct, safe, and appropriate use of drugs, is of great value to both healthcare professionals and patients. In this quick-reference guide meant for practising and student clinical pharmacists and also useful for industrial pharmacists, pharmacy technicians, and community pharmacists, the authors share their long years of experience and they express the wish that the book will contribute to assist clinical pharmacists in fulfilling their potential.

Especially during recent years there has been a strong multidisciplinary approach to patient care and the involvement of clinical pharmacists has changed accordingly. Indeed, good collaboration between physicians and pharmacists is essential and of increasing importance. There is no doubt, therefore, that this book should be included in all medical libraries and it will be of particular interest to those physicians involved in multidisciplinary pharmaceutical care, and most certainly to clinical pharmacologists.

In 16 chapters topics are organized alphabetically, covering practical information useful for practicing pharmacists on a day-to-day basis. Information on adherence, adverse drug reactions and drug interactions, anaphylaxis, clinical pharmacy skills, clinical trials, controlled drugs, evidence based medicine, herbal medicine, medical gases,

patient management, patient specific issues such as drug therapy in children and elderly, pharmaceutical calculations, pharmaceutical care, medicines management and research. The final chapter includes therapy-related issues. It is disease related and includes the management of more than 70 common medical conditions but also gives important background information such as the intrinsic and extrinsic pathways of blood coagulation and basic microbiology.

The first 15 chapters are an introduction to clinical pharmacy and give definitions, background information and general reference and methodological (e.g. with regard to clinical pharmacy skills) information. The field is widely covered from medication review to ward and patient etiquette and assertiveness. These chapters will be useful especially for pharmacists starting clinical pharmacy services and pharmacy students. For main topics such as dosing drugs in renal impairment and drugs in pregnancy and lactation, references of standard publications such as *The Renal Drug Handbook* by Ashley *et al.* and *Drugs in Pregnancy and Lactation* by Briggs *et al.* listing guidelines for specific drugs are included. An introductory chapter on contra-indications and on pharmacogenetics is lacking. Also the chapter on research is limited. Unfortunately, it does not make a strong appeal to clinical pharmacists to practice scientific drug and outcome research and here-with innovate the discipline.

In the appendix, tables are presented with normal and pathological laboratory values, drug interference with laboratory tests, therapeutic drug monitoring values in adults and a list of useful websites. A comprehensive index makes it easy to find information throughout the book.

In conclusion, this book is an important and well written contribution in the *Oxford Handbook* series and will prove useful especially for those pharmacists and students developing skills and knowledge in patient orientated pharmacy.

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