

Book Reviews

DRUGS IN CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM DISORDERS. Series: Clinical Pharmacology, Volume 2. Edited by David Horwell. Published by Marcel Dekker Inc. 354 pages.

In the preface of this volume, the editor states that the objective was "to review and update the information available from the literature on the major drugs used in the treatment of disorders of the central nervous system (CNS)". This monograph focuses on the pharmacological effects and attempts to detail the efficacy, adverse side effects, dosage, mode of action, routes of administration, pharmacodynamics, pharmacokinetics and metabolic principles of selected drugs.

The first chapter by Robert C.A. Frederickson and Martin D. Hynes provides a very complete review of centrally acting analgesics with emphasis on the conventional opioid agonist analgesics. It is acknowledged that the number of drugs available for the treatment of pain is vast, yet few have significant advantages over morphine. Included in this chapter are sections that present the limitations of existing analgesics, current trends for new pain treatment and descriptions of the newer agents. A total of 517 references provide a very useful list for the interested reader.

The editor, David C. Horwell contributed the second chapter on anti-depressants. The first few sections deal with the description, classification and etiology of depression, and remaining sections present a classical approach to the pharmacology of tricyclics, monamine oxidase inhibitors and second-generation (antidepressant-antianxiety) agents. A table of some second-generation drugs is useful, and more complete descriptions of several agents selected for clinical trial are included. A total of 209 references are listed.

The third chapter of Kelvin W. Gee and Henry I. Yamamura on benzodiazepines and barbiturates is well documented and provides a concise review of drugs used for the treatment of anxiety, insomnia and seizure disorders. The list of 85 selected references provide the basis of recent concepts and information. The basic material presented is associated with the clinical pharmacology.

Chapter 4 is a very extensive review of neuroleptics by Peter Jenner and C. David Marsden. This contribution is perhaps too lengthy for enjoyable reading, but does provide a great deal of information of the molecular and clinical perspectives. Considerable emphasis is placed on the interaction of these agents with dopamine receptors; however, the authors were successful in correlating the basic and clinical theories. Although the majority of concepts are current, the portion describing 4 subtypes of dopamine receptors will be only of historical interest.

The fifth chapter is an unusual combination of drugs used to treat endocrine and CNS motor disturbances by James A. Clemens. The first part deals with treatment of such disorders as hyperprolactinemia, amenorrheagalactorrhea, Cushing's disease, etc., and the second focuses on Parkinson's Disease, Tardive Dyskinesia, Tourette Syndrome and Huntington's Disease. Several relationships can be made between the two parts, but it would have been beneficial to separate the two. One hundred and thirty-one references are cited.

The last chapter by Peter J. Houghton and Norman G. Bisset is titled "Drugs of Ethno-Origin" and provides a short description of the naturally-occurring principle agents classified as psychostimulants, psychodepressants, psychoactive agents, cholinergics, alkaloids and non-alkaloids. A brief account of the therapeutic potential of CNS-active plant substances is provided, and 181 references are listed.

In general this volume may prove to be useful to those readers interested in CNS pharmacology. It is fairly well indexed and easy to read. Each chapter provides a significant contribution and the choice of most of the topics are relevant to current interests. It may be of interest to neuropharmacologists in general and to a lesser degree of clinicians.

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THE OXFORD COMPANION TO MEDICINE. Published by Oxford University Press.

These two volumes are a useful adjunct to the Oxford English Dictionary and medical dictionaries, such as Black or Dorland. They very effectively fill the gap amongst these references.

Although written principally in "English" English it is eminently readable on both sides of the Atlantic or wherever any English is spoken.

Many of the sections are followed with an extensive list of references and recommendations which would make them very valuable for students, lawyers or those preparing lectures, cases or speeches. The historical references are represented extremely well as are the sections on Religion, Philosophy, and Ethics as they relate to the practice of medicine.

The material is easily understood, as illustrated by the description of the very recent developments in Nuclear Magnetic Resonance. The explanation of this type of imaging is clearly explained to persons who are not extremely knowledgeable in the field of Physics. It is most interesting to learn that this diagnostic tool has a great part to play in diagnosing that most evasive disease of multiple sclerosis by easily demonstrating abnormal peri-ventricular lesions; similarly, a simple and harmless way of diagnosing many other areas of Pathology.

The sections on Law and Medicine are particularly well written and would be most useful to those involved with the application of the Law and its ramifications within the Health Care field. The reviews not only report cases in Health Care that have come to trial but provides a knowledgeable jurisprudential analysis.

If the goal of these two volumes is to be a comprehensive reference for the many diverse fields of Health Care, be it basic science, clinical application, the law and history, then it has been well met. These volumes are essential to the libraries of lawyers, teachers of medicine and would make a most welcome "big gift" to physicians and students.

These volumes are highly recommended!

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