written primarily for physicians and nurses. It provides some helpful suggestions for dealing with specific issues that frequently arise when communicating with a terminally ill individual. The chapter dealing with adapting to death, dying, and bereavement should assist pharmacists in understanding some of the psychological and social issues that dying patients face. The ethics chapter is of interest but focuses primarily on the question of euthanasia (both active and passive) and covers other issues only in a superficial manner.

The chapters dealing with specific symptoms generally provide helpful information regarding medication choices and dosing ranges. Most chapters have diagrams to explain the pathophysiology of each symptom and illustrate an algorithmic approach to treatment. The only difficulty is that some of the medication choices are specific to the United Kingdom.

Generally, hospital pharmacists working in palliative care or oncology will find this book a useful addition to their current references. It should complement, but not replace, other references in this area.

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Drug Treatment Protocols.

This book offers 44 disease-based treatment algorithms in an easy-to-use format that can be used for quick reference. The protocols are intended for use by pharmacists and other health-care providers in decisions related to drug therapy. Each algorithm is presented in a decision-tree format and is intended as a general guideline. Each decision point is accompanied by explanatory text, including some tables listing drug options. Most of the content is probably most applicable to community practice. These protocols were initially published quarterly between 1996 and 1998, and the intent of this book is to collate them for easy use.

The algorithms cover diseases related to the cardiovascular, endocrine and metabolic, gastrointestinal, and respiratory systems, as well as infectious, pediatric, and psychiatric problems. In addition, there is a section on self-treatable conditions and one on complications related to venous access devices.

The guide is practical, but there are some limitations to its use. In some sections, such as the one on infectious diseases, very few conditions are covered. Also, because information related to therapy can change quickly, some components may already need to be updated. For example, for hypertension, the recommendations are primarily based on the sixth report of the Joint National Committee on Prevention, Detection, Evaluation and Treatment of High Blood Pressure (known as JNC-VI). Yet information from newer trials (such as the UK Prospective Diabetes Study) should also be considered by practitioners making therapy decisions. The protocols usually recommend treatment by drug class, leaving the practitioner to determine the basis for selection of particular agents. In some of the self-care sections, herbal therapies are included, supported primarily with textbook references. It would be useful to state the level of evidence for these recommendations.

In using this guide, the practitioner will also have to consider the difference in availability of some drugs in Canada and the United States. With respect to laboratory parameters, imperial units (such as milligrams per decilitre) are used without conversions to SI units (such as millimoles per litre).

Overall, this is a well-laid-out, easy-to-use reference that would be a useful guide for community practitioners. Hospital pharmacists working within ambulatory and outpatient clinics will also find it helpful. Students and residents may find this a quick review of treatment for common conditions. With the
inclusion of more protocols in a future edition, this book has the potential to become a more extensive guide for pharmacists. However, at present, *Therapeutic Choices* is probably a more comprehensive reference, given its more complete coverage of disease conditions and drug therapy.

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References


This review of medicinal herbs appears to be intended for both an educated public audience and health-care professionals. It provides a well-written overview of the key issues related to herbal medicine, including herb quality, theories of herbalism, herbal dosage forms, and regulation. However, the regulation chapter explains the system in the United States and will not be very helpful for Canadian consumers. Each of chapters 4 through 12 focuses on problems related to a specific physiological system (such as the digestive and cardiovascular systems) and consists of a review of the safety and efficacy of the herbs commonly used to treat specific conditions within each category. The information provided is accurate, concise, objective, and often delivered with a sense of humour that makes the read both informative and entertaining. All chapters are completely referenced, and an extensive index facilitates access to information about specific herbs. Although the book does not claim to be comprehensive, it is clearly complete enough to satisfy the needs of any consumer and to provide a useful overview for a general health-care practitioner.

Hospital pharmacists will find this book an accurate and concise overview of the scientific evidence for the safety and efficacy of medicinal herbs. Information about each herb’s pharmacology, adverse effects, and potential drug interactions is provided. However, it does not contain as much detail, nor is it as comprehensive, as some other books available on this topic. For someone who knows nothing about herbal medicine, this is a great book with which to start. It would also be useful for pharmacists who interact with a wide range of patients who may be taking a variety of herbs for many different conditions. However, drug information pharmacists and pharmacists looking for in-depth information about herbs commonly used by specific patient populations will need additional reference material.

Overall, this is an excellent overview of the medicinal use of herbs. It is well written, entertaining, and — most important — accurate and objective. It is a great book to recommend for educated patients and general health-care practitioners, including pharmacists who see a wide range of patients.

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