labelling, storage, stability, and patient counselling requirements. At the end of these chapters, the author provides a few sample formulations with directions for their preparation. This book provides a handy reference for the more familiar dosage forms, such as oral suspensions, solutions, creams, and ointments, as well as for less common products such as lozenges and gels. Biotechnology products and veterinary dosage forms are also covered. Each chapter is designed to stand alone, a feature that inevitably results in some repetition.

The author emphasizes the responsibilities of the compounding pharmacist, including the necessity to review the available literature for information to support the product’s use, preparation, and stability. In particular, he emphasizes the need to provide a reasonable and rational expiry date. Unfortunately, these principles are not fully illustrated. Factors affecting stability, packaging, and storage are outlined in the chapter for each dosage form, but the sample formulations that follow do not mention appropriate packaging, storage, or expiry dates.


There is increasing interest in pharmaceutical compounding to meet unique patient needs. This book is certainly recommended for pharmacists who require a comprehensive general reference.

Susan Stansfield, BScPhm
Manager, Resources
Department of Pharmacy
The Hospital for Sick Children
Toronto, Ontario

References

Drugs of Choice: a Formulary for General Practice, third revision.
Softcover, 334 pages. $24.95. [also available on diskette]

*Drugs of Choice* is intended as a problem-oriented prescribing guide for primary care physicians. Organized by body system, from cardiovascular to respiratory, it lists what the authors have determined to be the most appropriate drug therapy for 194 clinical problems managed in the ambulatory care setting.

One of the strengths of this reference book is the manner in which the information is organized. The clinical problems are presented as subheadings within each body system. For each problem, an initial section entitled “Drugs of choice” lists the relevant drugs (along with the usual adult dose), presented by generic name and grouped by therapeutic classification. A comparison based on the daily cost of the average dose is included. For situations where there are only 4 therapeutically equivalent drugs, the authors have elected to list all 4 drugs; for clinical problems for which there are more than 4 equivalent drugs, only the 3 least expensive drugs are listed. The next subheading, “Second-line therapies”, is organized in the same manner. The authors have also established levels of evidence for their recommendations, another helpful guide for the user. The A and B levels of evidence are based on the strength of supporting literature or other documentation. Level C recommendations are based on the opinions of experts in the field. “Additional instructions and notes” follow the drug therapy listings, and each subsection concludes with the cited references.

There are several limitations to this formulary. Drug classification terms, such as “dihydropyridine”, are sometimes employed in the “Additional instructions and notes” section without being mentioned in the drug therapy tables. The use of “and” and “or” in the recommendations is sometimes confusing. Because this is a 1998 text, newer drug therapies are missing, such as the atypical antipsychotics. The attempt at brevity sometimes means that useful information is omitted. An example of this situation occurs in the list for hyperlipidemia, where elevated low-density lipoprotein is not defined and the user is referred to two 1996 references. No pharmacist was included among the authors and editors, an omission that is particularly evident in the
doses and dosage regimens, none of which are referenced and some of which are questionable. An example is the section on attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, where once-daily methylphenidate and dextroamphetamine are recommended without citation of the dosage form. Drugs that have been removed from the market, including pemoline and tolcapone, are listed. Information on adjusting drug dosage in renal dysfunction or other clinical situations is not included.

This book could be a useful guide for the hospital pharmacist practising in an ambulatory care setting, a long-term care unit, or a community hospital. The extensive dermatology section could prove particularly useful. However, the user must keep in mind the 1998 publication date and the limitations that this presents.

Janice Irvine-Meek, BSc(Pharm), PharmD
Pharmaceutical Care Services
Fredericton, New Brunswick

Books Received


