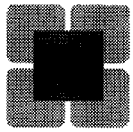

Z. NICHOLAS ZAKOV, MD, EDITOR

A GUIDE TO CLINICAL LABORATORY DIAGNOSIS

By John A. Koepke and John F. Koepke
Appleton & Lange

With current emphasis in medical practice on cost efficiency and the explosion in the number of laboratory tests available, this book is a helpful guide to appropriate use of the medical laboratory. Its problem-oriented approach guides the clinician in the use of laboratory testing after the initial history and physical examination. The book covers approximately 80% of the chief complaints in the inpatient setting.

A guide rather than a reference, the book aims to help the clinician sort through differential diagnoses of common medical problems, showing how various laboratory studies may be helpful in making a more specific diagnosis.

Medical students, house officers, and clinicians who want to review and update their laboratory approach to clinical problems will find *A Guide to Clinical Laboratory Diagnosis* helpful. It is clearly written and easily readable. Graphs and tables are well presented and illustrative of the points presented. Basic references to more specific reading are listed. The book is not comprehensive for most problems, however. Topics included are chest pain, anemia, acid-base disturbances, jaundice, diarrhea, and the acute abdomen. Guidelines for selection of transfusion therapy and tests to evaluate endocrine disorders are particularly well presented. A review of hematologic principles, with a clear outline of causes of anemia and abnormal bleeding, represent a major strength of the book. A brief section on drug monitoring is concisely presented. Sections dealing with interpretation of laboratory studies, including a brief discussion of how normal ranges are established, and organizing a laboratory on a hospital ward or in the office are well described. Other clinical problems that would benefit from greater description include heavy-metal poisoning and effects of excessive alcohol use.

Although much useful information is provided about laboratory testing, some clinicians may find fault with some of the tests indicated for certain problems. For example, hemoglobin A_1C level is not described in the assessment of problems related to diabetes, and folic acid level evaluation and skull radiographs are included in a recommended dementia evaluation. Other testing modalities, such as radiographic studies, electrocardiograms, pulmonary function testing, and tissue biopsy, are described briefly under various topic headings. Clues from the physical examination and history are also listed. This information, included seemingly for completeness, tends to detract from the objective of the book. The reader would have been better served if the discussion had focused on the various laboratory studies that could be used and avoided any discussion of other analyses.

For example, in discussing joint and muscle problems, the various clinical criteria for classification and diagnosis of rheumatoid arthritis, rheumatic fever, and systemic lupus erythematosus are presented, whereas only a short description of laboratory studies useful for gout are outlined. Specifically, little is mentioned about quantification of uric acid levels. The selection of laboratory studies for rheumatologic disease is a particularly difficult and confusing area and could have been outlined in greater detail and thereby have been more useful to the young clinician.

This easily readable book is well suited for students and young clinicians and accomplishes its stated goal to convey the principle that a physician should "think of horses and not zebras when hearing hoofbeats."

RICHARD S. LANG, MD, MPH
Department of Preventive Medicine

HIGH-DENSITY LIPOPROTEINS: PHYSIOPATHOLOGICAL ASPECTS AND CLINICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Edited by Alberico L. Catapano, Gianfranco Salvioli, and Carlo Vergani
Raven Press

This volume presents a broad range of basic and clinical research findings on the metabolism of high-density lipoproteins (HDL). The opening chapter, a brief review of the HDL system, is helpful for those not familiar with this complex system. Subsequent chapters describe in greater detail an array of biochemical features of the