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ATHEROSCLEROSIS REVIEWS (VOL 21): PREVENTION AND NONINVASIVE THERAPY OF ATHEROSCLEROSIS

Edited by Alexander Leaf and Peter C. Weber

This book reviews data from the first Bayer AG International Workshop on Atherosclerosis held in Key West, Florida, in December 1989. The first several chapters present epidemiologic data linking various cardiovascular risk factors with coronary heart disease. The middle portion of the book discusses mechanisms of atherosclerosis. This segment includes an excellent review of cellular interactions and growth factors important in atherogenesis. Oxidative modification of LDL cholesterol in the pathogenesis of atherosclerosis and the role of platelet-vessel wall interactions are examined. The relation of endothelium-derived relaxing factor (nitric oxide) to the development of atherosclerosis is discussed in detail. The last part of the book elaborates on lipid-lowering therapy in the progression and regression of atherosclerosis, as well as new trends in atherosclerosis research.

Significant advances in the pathogenesis, prevention, and treatment of atherosclerosis have been made since the workshop took place. An enormous amount of information on the function of the endothelium as a vascular organ has come forth, and several studies in humans involving lifestyle modification, lipid-lowering drug therapy, or both, have shown that regression of atherosclerosis is possible. Unfortunately, much of this information was not available when the workshop took place.

The only criticism of this book is the ordering of the chapters. Epidemiologic data are scattered throughout, and other topics that should have been grouped were not. As a result, the book does not read as fluently as it could. Generally, though, the book is an excellent review of many different aspects of atherosclerosis.

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INTRA-ABDOMINAL INFECTIONS: PATHOPHYSIOLOGY AND TREATMENT

By Dietmar H. Wittmann, MD, PhD
Marcel Dekker

Intra-abdominal infections are a challenging problem associated with high morbidity and mortality in medical, surgical, and critically ill patients. This book completely reviews the subject from etiology and definition to clinical features and pathophysiology, with case histories.

The chapter on pathogens gives in-depth knowledge of the microorganisms involved. The discussion of antibiotics gives practical approaches to treatment. The book's outstanding feature is a review of scoring systems such as APACHE II, PIA II, and the Peritonitis Index. The concluding chapters on new methods of operative management with critical care treatments completes the book, though this chapter would have benefited from some case illustrations.

Abundant illustrations, graphs, and photographs make the book easy to read while emphasizing essential material. This book would be good reading material for residents and physicians in surgery, critical care, and gastroenterology.

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DRUG TREATMENT OF HYPERLIPIDEMIA

Edited by Basil M. Rifkind
Marcel Dekker

The fairly diverse range of topics this book addresses include lipoprotein metabolism, classification of clinical dyslipidemic syndromes, evaluation and treatment of hypercholesterolemia in adults, dietary management of these patients, and clinical trials of cholesterol-lowering drug treatment. Only 6 of the 11 chapters are devoted primarily to pharmacologic treatment, and these chapters do not present comprehensive reviews of the clinical pharmacology, potential toxicity, efficacy, or clinical utility of currently available cholesterol-lowering agents.

The text is concise, clearly written, and probably a useful resource for primary care physicians, physicians in training, and medical students. Practical suggestions to improve adherence and tolerability of bile acid sequestrants (cholestyramine and colestipol) are addressed in a chapter by Donald Hunninghake, MD, who probably has more experience than anyone with the use of these agents in treating elevated low-density lipoprotein cholesterol levels. Individual chapters are also devoted to treatment with nicotinic acid, fibric acid derivatives (eg, gemfibrozil), probucol, and hepatic hydroxymethylglutaryl coenzyme A (HMG-CoA) reductase inhibitors (lovastatin, pravastatin, simvastatin). A few clinical cases with discussion of rationale for drug selection and treatment would have been helpful.

The separation of chapters by pharmacologic class has the disadvantage of reducing discussion of options to selection of specific agents for initial or subsequent drug treatment. Fortunately, this is not a major problem, since currently approved lipid-altering agents comprise only five drug classes (bile acid sequestrants, nicotinic acid, fibric acid derivatives, probucol, and the HMG-CoA reductase inhibitors). For practical purposes, only the classes of HMG-CoA reductase inhibitors and bile acid sequestrants contain more than one agent, with the three HMG-CoA reductase inhibitors constituting the largest number of drugs in a single class (this is interesting in light of the fact that this is the newest class of cholesterol-lowering drugs).

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ADVENTURES IN MEDICINE

By Sibley Hoobler, MD

Dr. Sibley Hoobler's is a very interesting and readable book written to stimulate young people to choose a career in medicine. In addition to information of historical interest regarding such greats as Louis Pasteur and William Osler, Dr. Hoobler describes his own medical career. He then goes on to describe many of the great discoveries in medicine from 1940 to 1990, certainly a time of major advances in the practice of medicine. I can recommend this work not only for young people interested in medicine, but also for those of us involved in a career in medicine.

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