

### **The Women's Health Data Book**

*Edited by Jacqueline A. Horton, 125 pp, \$24.95, ISSN 1049-3867, Washington, DC, Jacobs Institute of Women's Health, 1992.*

The title of this book is entirely too dry for the insightful, comprehensive, well-done content of the book. After turning the first page, I was engrossed with its content, and it was indeed a pleasure to review. This book is a joint effort between the Jacobs Institute of Women's Health, Mead Johnson Laboratories, and the Committee on Development of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. Horton, the primary author and editor, is administrator of the Department of Research of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. The publishers have indeed compiled much relevant information into a single publication that does a wonderful job of summarizing national data on a wide range of issues that will help us understand the health of the women we care for as family physicians in the 1990s.

This book is intended to be helpful to a broad variety of readers, including physicians, other health professionals, researchers, policymakers, teachers, and laypeople interested in an overview of the factors affecting women's health. The book also is a good reference for trends affecting population subgroups of women, in-

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cluding adolescents, geriatric women, and certain minority populations.

I was especially pleased to find that each chapter was well documented and heavily footnoted and seems an excellent source of reference material for researchers in women's health care issues.

The book covers all of the expected topics from unwanted pregnancies and abortions through infertility, but in an interesting touch also includes adoption information. In addition, the book discusses infectious diseases and trends in sexually transmitted diseases among women. Those in family medicine will be particularly happy to see an entire chapter on violence against women that is concise, well written, and frightening in its figures.

My favorite chapter, however, is the one devoted to women's access to the health care system. The authors do a wonderful job of discussing women's particular problems in getting access to all services, including prenatal and preventive services. The chapter concludes with a timely discussion of the differences in use of medical interventions between women and men.

Since I am frequently asked to speak about women's health at a variety of functions, I found this book invaluable. I recently gave a talk to women legislators from the Midwest, and the whole group asked the sponsor to provide them with copies of this book to use for their referencing in state policy issues concerning women's health. This book is a must for the library of every family practice residency program.

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### **Interpretation of Diagnostic Tests: A Synopsis of Laboratory Medicine**

*5th ed, by Jacques Wallach, 933 pp, \$31.50, ISBN 0-316-92050-9, Boston, Mass, Little, Brown & Co Inc, 1991.*

"This book was written to improve laboratory utilization by making it simpler for the physician to select and interpret the most useful laboratory tests for his clinical problems," notes Wallach in the introduction. After having office-based experience with Wallach's perennially popular manual, I conclude that he is again quite successful in the stated endeavor. While the author's efforts and, thus, the size of the manual, have expanded in the years since the first edition, the manual remains compact and readily accessible for clinical use. Four major sections are presented: normal laboratory reference values and critical values, the differential diagnostic considerations in cases of results of abnormal examinations, the use of the laboratory in the evaluation of 13 organ systems and their respective pathologic conditions, and medications and their influence on laboratory test values. The last section discusses therapeutic drug monitoring.

The first section is brief and straightforward, as one might anticipate. Quick retrieval of answers is assisted by the tabular format of this section. Section 2 illustrates a particular strength in this book—rapidly obtained differential diagnoses. For example, should a lab slip be returned to a physician noting a serum potassium level of 2.3 mmol/L from a patient not taking diuretic medication, a brief consultation in this section would yield a concise list of

35 points to be considered in the differential diagnosis of hypokalemia as well as a clearly constructed flow diagram outlining the subsequent laboratory evaluation of this entity. In section 3, "Diseases of Organ Systems" (the most extensive part of the book), the text becomes appropriately academic, providing a synopsis of the laboratory manifestations of the most commonly presenting diseases. Pulmonary, gastrointestinal, renal, and endocrine disorders are but a few of the clinical areas addressed. Information in this section is also concisely presented, with each evaluation being covered in great depth. For example, in the case of a patient presenting with hepatic cirrhosis, Wallach reviews the expected findings, range of normal values, and variations for each hepatic function test available (eg, "serum LAP is slightly increased in 30% of patients, total serum cholesterol is normal or decreased"). After approaching cirrhosis generally, specific types (eg, Wilson's disease and hemochromatosis) are reviewed. Algorithms and tables abound, making the total format one that enhances both practitioners' knowledge of internal medicine and clinical efficiency in patient care. The last section, "Drugs and Laboratory Test Values," offers extremely useful tables that outline interactions of medications as reflected in results of laboratory tests. For "drugs that may

cause increased urine catecholamines," 20 possible drug interactions are listed. The example of "drugs that can/may potentiate Coumarin action" shows how clinically relevant this section can be. A particular table in this section, "Drugs of Abuse," provided me with a new reference to street names, toxic levels, and appropriate assay of such drugs.

Above all, Wallach's index is the major asset of the manual. There are 130 pages of references to tests, conditions, diseases, symptoms, and medications that time after time send the reader exactly to where the desired information rests. The overwhelming thoroughness is demonstrated by the entry for sedimentation rate, which lists 70 areas of reference.

*Interpretation of Diagnostic Tests* continues to be so practical that it remains a "must have" for all clinical libraries. Students and residents alike will also continue to admire this manual, as it presents highly accessible essential laboratory information and decision-making advice relevant to both the learning process and preparation for examination in internal medicine. The trick with forthcoming editions is to keep this manual comprehensive while concise. Wallach continues as no other in capturing that goal.

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