

### Mayo Clinic Cardiology Review

edited by Joseph G. Murphy, MD, with illus, ISBN 0-879-993662-2, 724 pp, \$89, Armonk, NY, Futura Publishing Co Inc, 1997.

This book has been prepared for candidates for the American Board of Internal Medicine Subspecialty Examination in Cardiovascular Diseases ("the cardiology boards"). It, in fact, begins with a discussion of the boards, their idiosyncrasies, and grading.

There is a good series of chapters on basic physiology that function as a review or perhaps as a "checkpoint" for the physician regarding the recall of these important background facts. The tables throughout the chapters and well-designed figures help to highlight the most important facts. Also, quizzes at the end, with answers and explanations, help provide a quick and timely review of the material and the degree to which the readers have comprehended what they have read.

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### Conn's Current Therapy—1998

edited by Robert E. Rake, MD, 1360 pp, with 42 illustrations, \$59, ISBN 0-7216-7223-X, Philadelphia, Pa, WB Saunders Co, 1998.

I have trouble imagining any family physician who has never seen and used a copy of *Conn's Current Therapy*, so the general format should be familiar to all. This annual effort has for years successfully covered the most common medical and surgi-

cal problems encountered in primary care to update the physician on current thinking and practice. This edition is the 50th Anniversary Edition, but other than a sparkling gold cover, it appears very similar to prior editions. The fact that it remains so much the same in format from year to year is what makes it ultimately so usable in everyday practice.

All the chapters are written from the perspective of the preferred method of the consultant author and contain numerous, helpful tables that present the "nuts and bolts" of management of the particular problem under discussion. For example, the chapter on congestive heart failure contains tables on "causes of acute decompensation of heart failure," "indications for hospitalization for heart failure," and "medicines commonly used for heart failure." These tables alone can get you past a brain block when you are under pressure for quick information. When I consulted the book for help regarding the management of my patient with deep venous thrombosis, I found a table outlining a protocol for intravenous administration of heparin and a discussion of thrombolytic usage that matches up very well with what I have learned from my own local consultants. I have always believed the information presented in *Conn's Current Therapy* was reliable and up-to-date.

*Conn's Current Therapy* is enhanced by the addition of the most commonly used disease and *International Classification of Diseases, Ninth Revision, Clinical Modification* codes to the inside front cover and overleaf, and by tables of reference intervals for the interpretation of laboratory tests. This book has become a standard reference for the busy practitioner and rightly so because as a single source for rapid consultation on a particular medical problem, it will always refresh the memory and add a new idea or

two to consider in the patient's management.

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### Saunders' Manual of Pediatric Practice

edited by Laurence Finberg, 1088 pp, \$75, with 84 illus, ISBN 0-7216-6537-3, Philadelphia, Pa, WB Saunders Co, 1998.

### The 5 Minute Pediatric Consult

edited by William Schwartz, 893 pp, ISBN 0-683-07640-X, \$59.95, Baltimore, Md, Williams & Wilkins, 1997.

Several years ago, while precepting in a residency program, an upper-level resident excused himself to retrieve a text, returning seconds later with Mark Dambro's *5 Minute Clinical Consult*, an encyclopedic primary care reference wherein alphabetically arranged chapters follow a rigorous 2-page outline format. The book rapidly became one of the most frequently used texts in the office. Its success in the publishing market quickly generated competition from W. B. Saunders Company in the form of *Saunders' Manual of Medical Practice*, which while less structured, offered similar outline-based chapters with bulleted key symptoms, signs, and treatments. Now there are pediatric versions of each text slugging it out as well: *Saunders' Manual of Pediatric Practice* and *The 5 Minute Pediatric Consult*, each hoping to gain as much shelf space as their predecessors for adults.

*Saunders' Manual of Pediatric Practice* is a formidable, though in the end inferior, competitor. Weighing in at almost 6 lb, the text is a

multiauthored, multi-institution effort coordinated by 21 section editors and more than 180 authors, many of whom are experts in their chapter topics. Unfortunately, the organization of the text is somewhat complex, making it difficult to quickly locate information, even when using the index. The fact that the 10-page table of contents is buried behind 13 pages of front matter does not help one find things quickly either.

Individual chapters attempt to follow a uniform outline, containing subchapter headings including definition, etiology, epidemiology, pathophysiology, clinical findings, laboratory/radiology findings, and treatment. Numerous tables of "Key Findings" highlight important messages in the text, but diagrams and photographs are sparse. Unfortunately, the outline format is adhered to inconsistently, often with confusing results. For example, in chapter 84, "Vasculitis Syndromes of Childhood," the "Clinical Findings" subheading includes a lengthy list of illnesses, including their symptoms, laboratory findings, and treatments. This is despite later chapter

subheadings dealing with symptoms and treatment, a more logical place for this information. Unless one knew in advance where to look, the reader would perhaps overlook specific treatment options for several conditions.

There are also duplicate discussions of several conditions. For example, an entire chapter is devoted to otitis media, but a more engaging discussion of its treatment and prevention occurs in the chapter on earaches.

Despite these drawbacks, *Saunders' Manual of Pediatric Practice* fits the niche between small pocket handbooks and exhaustive disease-oriented textbooks like Nelson's *Textbook of Pediatrics*. Like the latter, however, Saunders' manual is better suited for more general reading rather than a ready reference in the office. Students and residents on their inpatient or subspecialty pediatrics rotations will likely find the text more useful than will practicing primary care physicians.

*The 5 Minute Pediatric Consult*, in contrast, is a quick reference text divided into 4 sections: chief complaints, specific diseases,

syndromes, and tables of useful information. With the exception of the last section, the text is formatted entirely as 2-page chapters, with a rigid outline format for each chapter. Although there is a complete index and an easily located table of contents, one rarely has to use them, as the chapters are arranged alphabetically with bold titles at the upper/outer corner of each page to help one find a topic.

*The 5 Minute Pediatric Consult* is the preference here. One can find topics faster, review major concepts more quickly, and return to patient care with the information one needs. While the Saunders text can be used as a backup from time to time, Nelson's *Textbook of Pediatrics* is probably a better choice if one cannot find the necessary information in *The 5 Minute Pediatric Consult*.

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