

Asthma. Graeme P Currie MBChB DCH Pg Dip Med Ed MP (UK) MD, editor. *Oxford Respiratory Medicine Library* series. New York: Oxford University Press. 2008. Soft cover, 112 pages, \$24.95.

Asthma prevalence has increased in developed countries around the world, and asthma is frequently encountered by primary-care practitioners. It is a complex syndrome with diverse phenotypic presentations, and has become a major public-health concern with far-reaching societal costs and morbidity. This book is a highly readable, clinically relevant guide for the practitioner, and is the latest addition to the *Oxford Respiratory Medicine Library* series. Edited by Graeme Currie, from the Aberdeen Royal Infirmary, it is a slim volume that is ideal for on-the-go, evidence-based reading by the active clinician. The book concisely assesses the state of the art in asthma pathophysiology and treatment. The presentation of information is clear and has appropriately placed emphasis to inform a wide audience. The content is oriented to the primary-care physician, but it will probably be a helpful, informative read for nurses and respiratory therapists and a concise summary for the pulmonary specialist, with key references provided for further reading. Medical students and house officers as well would find this a useful resource upon entering an outpatient pulmonary training environment.

The text is divided into clinically relevant sections, identified on tabs on the margins. Thus, the book can serve as a quick pocket reference in the clinic or hospital. We found it a brief, engaging read, with illustrations and tables summarizing the key points. The book touches on a broad array of asthma topics, with accuracy and accessible style. Some of the information presented, including that on asthma epidemiology, economic impact, and specific medications, reflects asthma practice in the United Kingdom, but the principles set forth are consistent with experience in other developed countries. The section on pathophysiology is simplified but clear, and would provide the non-scientist with a view of key concepts in our understanding of asthma. The sections on clinical presentations of

asthma, including exacerbations and difficult asthma, are succinct and outline a thoughtful framework for approaching the wheezing patient.

The approach to severity assessment and asthma management presented here is indigenous to the United Kingdom but is generally concordant with guidelines used in the United States. Importantly, the parameters for assigning the severity of an asthma exacerbation differ, and no framework is presented for assignment of relatively stable asthma to treatment group (eg, intermittent, mild persistent). However, the stepwise treatment approach recommended is logical, useful, and is not accompanied by a complex scheme for choosing an appropriate treatment. Though many of the sections “travel well,” concepts presented in the section on asthma in primary care will largely be of interest to United Kingdom clinicians.

Overall we found this book concise, helpfully organized, and clearly written. To the extent that it reflects the approach to asthma in the United Kingdom, it is an interesting companion work to currently available asthma monographs from the United States. This insightful review of current asthma management can be read in a short time and carried for reference. Trainees and practitioners alike would be effectively updated in asthma by doing so.

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Hyperbaric Medicine Practice, 3rd edition. Eric P Kindwall MD, Harry T Whelan MD, editors. Flagstaff, Arizona: Best Publishing. 2008. Hard cover, 1,080 pages, \$189.

The latest edition of Kindwall and Whelan's **Hyperbaric Medicine Practice** has arrived, after a 9-year hiatus since the last major revision (there were 2 minor re-

visions of the second edition), and with it a renewed debate about which is the best general textbook in the field. This book has held a preeminent place in the field of hyperbaric medicine since the first edition in 1994, but there are now 2 credible contenders, and the choice has never been more difficult. The contenders, in my opinion, are the European *Handbook on Hyperbaric Medicine* (2006), edited by Mathieu, and *Physiology and Medicine of Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy* (2008), edited by Neuman and Thom.

The first edition of **Hyperbaric Medicine Practice** was a much-needed comprehensive text that addressed growing criticism of a field in which an uncertain scientific basis seemed reflected in the quality of texts available. Kindwall made clear in the introduction that he intended to supply details of the scientific background and would emphasize the practical application of these findings to patients. In that Kindwall succeeded admirably, and his work provided the bedrock of clinical practice for many hyperbaric physicians worldwide. Not unexpectedly, the world has moved on at a rapid pace since 1994, and the modern evidence-based approach to medicine—with its growing emphasis on the value of good clinical evidence—meant the original text needed revision to reflect this reality. It is by the rigor with which the contributors have assessed the current state of the evidence that this third edition will be judged.

In the preface Kindwall expresses the hope that this book will “remain an up-to-date reference text” and that “clinicians as well as researchers may find it useful.” The text is therefore designed primarily for hyperbaric physicians, but is, for the most part, clearly written and with limited resort to jargon, so there is a wealth of information for physicians working in other areas, and for nurses and technicians in hyperbaric medicine. For the latter, the first section, on general considerations, is a particularly clear summary of an unusual field.

The book is handsome and in the classic, unadorned style of Best Publishing's recent suite of texts. It runs to 1,076 pages and so is only slightly weightier than the second edition (952 pages). It remains quite an im-