

chi-square analyses, risk and odds ratios, hypothesis testing (p values), analysis of variance (ANOVA), correlation, simple linear regression analysis, and time-to-event analysis (survival analysis).

Many published studies did not have samples large enough to rule out clinically important differences, even if such differences were to be found in the data. Thus, the fact that sample-size calculations are described in their own chapter (Chapter 7) appropriately emphasizes this important, if neglected, aspect of study design.

Chapter 8 describes the logic behind diagnostic test characteristics and prognostic studies, such as sensitivity, predictive values, likelihood ratios, receiver operating characteristics curves, and Bayes's theorem. By nature, these concepts are difficult to understand in the short-term. Any difficulty encountered by readers should be attributed to the concepts, not to the text, which, as in the rest of the book, provides clear explanations and illustrative examples.

Chapters 9 and 10 cover other topics of interest, such as the notion of causality, differences between clinical and statistical significance, differences between absolute and relative risk, and how to use statistical software programs.

Publication is the final stage of research, and an appealing part of the book is Chapter 11, which describes how to write and publish a scientific article. The important points are addressed, including issues of authorship, journal selection, rejection, and even dealing with the media.

The book closes with a list of the steps to follow in planning and conducting clinical research. The index is adequate.

In summary, this book does what the author intended it to do, and does so with great skill and grace. It is reasonably priced and will be a valued reference for some time to come. What's not to like?

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**Bronchial Asthma: A Guide for Practical Understanding and Treatment**, 5th edition. M Eric Gershwin MD and Timothy E Albertson MD MPH PhD, editors. *Current Clinical Practice* series, Neil S Skolnik MD, series editor. Totowa, New Jersey: Humana Press. 2006. Hard cover, illustrated, 405 pages, \$125.

**Bronchial Asthma: A Guide for Practical Understanding and Treatment**, 5th edition, has 19 chapters, which cover the epidemiology of asthma, diagnosis, testing, management, and medication in various patient groups, including children, pregnant women and perioperative patients. In addition there are interesting sections on living with asthma, complementary/alternative therapies, and asthma and the law. The editors are physician-scientists trained in clinical immunology and pharmacology (Gershwin) and pulmonary/critical care medicine (Albertson). The contributors are practitioners and researchers from the United States. This 5th edition incorporates information on new pharmaceuticals and has a chapter on the effects of foods and additives.

The Introduction indicates that the book was designed to be a resource for family physicians, internists, allergists, and nurse practitioners, and it does achieve that, and more. One might ask why a textbook such as this is needed on asthma, particularly when the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute guidelines are readily available online, as are review articles and nearly all peer-reviewed publications. However, this book provides in one place a compilation, interpretation, and summary of scholarly work and guidelines into largely clinically relevant topics.

One of the greatest problems with textbooks, in general, is the time lag caused by the editing, printing, and distribution process. In many chapters in this book the most recent research cited is from 2003 or 2004, which is not a critique of any of the authors, but rather a problem of medical textbooks in general. However, one of the greatest problems with the medical literature is the seemingly endless number of articles on a topic; therefore, a resource that compiles masses of information into a format that both educates and provides clinically useful information in less than 400 pages is invaluable.

There are some particular gems among the chapters in this text. The third chapter, on pulmonary function testing, is excellent;

it provides a comprehensive enough overview of the concepts and measurements, as well as indications and interpretations, to make it a useful guide to primary-care physicians, house officers, and fellows. Similarly, the chapter on childhood asthma provides useful information, sensibly organized, and includes medication overviews and dosing.

The chapter on infectious and environmental triggers is one of the most comprehensive reviews I have read on this topic. The chapters on special problems in asthma, such as foods and additives, are particularly timely and well done, because there has been so much information in the lay press; so this is a topic about which primary-care and other physicians are probably interested and seeking knowledge.

There are a few problems with the text: there are some unusual abbreviations, grammatical errors, incorrect references, and factual errors. There is also marked variability among the chapters, in organization and presentation of recommendations. Several authors are very clear on which assertions and recommendations are based on research, versus on expert or consensus opinion, and which recommendations represent the author's own opinion, but this is not the case in all the chapters. In the vast majority of chapters, however, the material is presented in a very organized and useful manner.

Acknowledging those minor limitations, this textbook provides in a single volume a large compilation of what has become an overwhelming amount of information about asthma. It is more than just a clinical resource, as it incorporates and summarizes decades of research to inform the clinician on theories and the direction of asthma research. This is an excellent resource for those interested in more than just the dose of a medication or a management strategy; it's got everything, and is thus a tremendous resource for primary-care practitioners, subspecialists, and fellows in training.

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