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BOOK REVIEW

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Practical Cardiology, 2nd Edition

Tracy Baker, George Nikolić, Simon O'Connor
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In the preface to the second edition of *Practical Cardiology*, the authors state that the book has been updated to reflect changes in cardiology, with the introduction of concepts such as cardiovascular risk. In addition, previous recommendations have been updated and are based on the results of randomised trials providing evidence for clinical practice. A new section on electrocardiography has been introduced to build on basic ECG interpretation and putting ECG's in a clinical context. A DVD has been included with video images to assist readers. The authors have also introduced case-based learning sections reflecting changes in medical education.

The book starts with a brief summary of some important cardiology trials and their outcomes. Each chapter is followed by end notes listing important publications providing evidence for the material in each chapter. Numerous illustrations and tables are used effectively throughout the book to facilitate understanding.

The initial chapters of the book include Chapters on Coronary Risk Factors and Hypertension. The impact of individual and combined risk factors on mortality is clearly explained and examples are provided that would be useful in discussion with patients. The importance of lipid metabolism and benefits of lipid reduction are clearly explained, along with indications and effectiveness of various pharmacological treatments. I found the presence of a chapter on hypertension a little unexpected, as the rest of the book seems to be targeted towards more advanced practitioner. It is however, well written and illustrated with a clearly presented table to help guide choice of anti-hypertensive agents.

The chapter titled 'An Overview of Clinical Electrocardiography' is focused on the systematic description and interpretation of ECGs – albeit that the basic physics of electrocardiography is beyond the scope of this book. However, the extensive use of ECG recordings does assist the reader with a better understanding of definitions, and illustrates some common problems related to impulse conduction, atrial and junctional arrhythmias, ventricular arrhythmias, myocardial ischaemia and infarction, as well as pacemakers. This chapter is very well written and is suited to intermediate and advanced trainees who have an understanding of basic ECG physics.

Subsequent chapters cover common presentations and revascularisation. The chapter on 'The Patient with Chest Pain' covers important history and examination findings, along with the appropriate investigation and management of such patients. Sensitivity and specificity are clearly defined for each investigation, in addition to newer investigations such as intravascular ultrasound, angiography and multi-detector CT. The medical treatment of angina is also well covered, as is the section on acute coronary syndromes which covers markers of myocardial damage and includes multiple ECGs ranging from normal variants through to ST-elevation myocardial infarction. Risk stratification of the patient with chest pain is well covered with the incorporation of recent NHF/CSANZ (National Heart Foundation/Cardiac Society of Australia and New Zealand) guidelines. The treatment and complications of myocardial infarction are defined, including primary angioplasty and thrombolysis. There is a section on the non-cardiac causes of chest pain, including important features in patient history, and examination for conditions such as pulmonary embolism, aortic dissection, pneumothorax and others.

The chapter on 'The Revascularisation Patient' briefly covers the history of stenting and the variety of stents that are available. Indications for stenting and coronary artery surgery are presented, in addition to complications of stenting. Chapters on 'Palpitations' and 'Dyspnoea' indicate the important features to obtain from patient history and physical examination.

A section on the resting ECG that may aid diagnosis, is well emphasised, and the role of Holter monitoring and electrophysiological studies are clearly explained. The management of atrial fibrillation and risk of thromboembolism is very well covered, using tables to illustrate risk factors for stroke in patients with AF, and a table to help guide the choice between use of aspirin or warfarin. There is also substantial information on pacemakers, types that are commonly used, and problems that may be encountered with them. Cardiac failure, pulmonary hypertension and non-cardiac causes of dyspnoea are covered, along with the role of echocardiography in cardiac failure. Numerous illustrations and ECG recordings are included in these chapters.

Examination, investigation and management of the patient with a murmur are covered in the chapter on 'The Patient with a Murmur', using illustrative echocardiogram images to round out the chapter.

The last chapter presents a mixed bag of wide ranging material, which relates to cardiac arrest; BLS and ALS; ankle oedema; syncope and dizziness; fitness to drive; pregnancy with hypertension and cardiomyopathy; and, cyanotic congenital heart disease.

Each chapter (except the last) finishes with sections which would be useful as a framework for case based learning, as each provides illustrative cases and a framework for discussion. The structure, illustrations and tables in this book are very well referenced in the text, which makes the book easy to read.

In summary, this book is well suited to advanced medical students, Fellowship trainees and GPs. It is also a useful, well referenced and up to date piece of work that would suit anyone in clinical practice who is considering a refresher in cardiology.

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