THE METABOLIC MANAGEMENT OF THE CRITICALLY ILL—Douglas W. Wilmore, MD, U.S. Army Institute of Surgical Research, Brooke Army Medical Center, Fort Sam Houston, Texas—Reviewing Surgical Topics Series Edited by Thomas King, MD and Keith Reemtsma, MD, Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons, New York. Plenum Publishing Corporation, 227 West 17th St., New York City (10011), 1977. 260 pages, $22.50.

One of the major deficiencies in the medical education of physicians is the area of nutrition. As Dr. Wilmore points out, nutritional surveys carried out on medical and surgical services in large hospitals demonstrate evidence of protein-calorie malnutrition in over 25 percent of patients on those services. Thus, any monograph on the subject of the metabolic and nutritional care of patients in hospital that is informative, easy to read and directly applicable to patient care is welcome.

Dr. Wilmore has synthesized a great quantity of information, and has drawn on his own extensive experience with patients suffering from thermal burns, to produce an easy-to-read book. The book contains five chapters dealing with energy and energy balance, the control of body temperature, hormonal control of body fuels, alterations that take place in intermediary metabolism during illness, and the nutritional management of seriously ill patients. Each chapter is divided into subsections which are headed by questions (such as "What is RQ? Why is it useful?"), followed by a relatively succinct answer to the questions. A pad of metabolic and nutritional worksheets is provided and the appendix to the book describes in detail how the worksheets should be used in order to calculate the nutritional requirements of the patient. The majority of the essential and practical information is contained in the first and last chapters and the appendix. The middle three chapters provide an up-to-date summary of the biochemical problems that affect energy metabolism during illness.

The author has appropriately reproduced numerous useful nomograms for calculating the nutritional requirements in the appendix section and has provided a loose-leaf copy of the appendix that could be posted on patient wards or in an intensive care unit.

The major problem with this monograph is the frequent use of the question-oriented subheadings in each chapter. This tends to decrease the overall adhesiveness of the individual topics covered. The book does provide a useful overview and is heavily annotated and, therefore, will be of use as a primer to senior medical students, medical and surgical house officers, and physicians who deal with large numbers of patients with acute critical illness or chronic disorders. Utilization of Dr. Wilmore's nutritional and metabolic support plan should certainly reduce the incidence of hospital malnutrition.

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ANTIMICROBIAL PRESCRIBING—Harold C. Neu, MD, Professor of Medicine and Pharmacology, Columbia University; Head, Division of Infectious Diseases, Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center, New York. Antimicrobial Prescribing, Inc., P.O. Box 3153, Princeton, NJ (08540), 1979. 111 pages, $19.95.

This is one of several recently available handbooks dealing with the appropriate selection and use of antimicrobial agents. The book can be roughly divided into four parts. The first deals with the selection of agents for specific infections and/or microbial pathogens. The second discusses the spectrum and pharmacology of the most commonly used chemotherapeutics, while the third deals with a variety of other treatment problems. These include drug interactions and toxicity, prophylaxis and dosage adjustment during renal failure. Finally, a brief section on vaccines and immunizations is included.

This material is presented almost entirely in tabular form, allowing the author to organize an enormous amount of data into relatively little space. The format of the tables is simple and the data are easy to peruse. The sections dealing with specific clinical infections, antimicrobial drug interactions and prophylaxis are particularly good.

The author's quest for brevity, however, has led to several irritating flaws. Abbreviations such as PRP (penicillinase resistant-penicillins) and oral flora (anaerobic oral flora) are used without adequate footnoting, and comments are often so foreshortened that the reader is left confused or uncertain of the author's message. Moreover, vital information such as the importance of maintaining an airway in acute epiglottitis is absent. The author several times mentions anaerobic streptococci—presumably a reference to peptostreptococci—thus perpetuating a common but unfortunate mistake. Dosing information, such as that for metronidazole in the treatment of *Trichomonas vaginalis* infections, is occasionally in error as well. Finally, it is sometimes difficult to find specific antibiotic doses for certain clinical problems. For instance, in the section dealing with infections of the central nervous system, methicillin and chloramphenicol are recommended for *S aureus* meningitis. Turning to the section dealing with the penicillins one finds the dose for methicillin listed as 1 to 2 grams every four to six hours. Examining the next logical table, "Antibiotic Dosage by Condition," is of no help since methicillin is not listed under meningitis. It is only after turning to a fourth table, "Dosage of Antibiotics in the Treatment of Life-Threatening Infections in Adults and Older Children," that the appropriate dosing information is found.

Considering the clarity of format and the enormous amount of data presented, such flaws are relatively minor. Nevertheless, they are disconcerting in a publication selling for nearly 20 dollars. It is hard to recommend this book to a practicing physician when comparable or nearly comparable publications are available at much lower cost.

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DRUG INTERACTIONS—Clinical Significance of Drug-Drug Interactions and Drug Effects on Clinical Laboratory Results—Fourth Edition—Philip D. Hansten, Pharm D, Associate Professor of Clinical Pharmacy, College of Pharmacy, Washington State University, Pullman, WA. Lea & Febiger, 600 Washington Square, Philadelphia (19106), 1979. 552 pages, $16.00.

The task of keeping abreast of drug-drug and drug-food interactions is difficult considering the large number of drugs available and the frequency with which patients are simultaneously treated with more than one drug. The fourth edition of *Drug Interactions* is a welcome update of the rapidly expanding and changing field of drug-drug interactions. Hansten's clear and concise style, which were hallmarks of previous editions, is maintained in the new edition.

The book contains two parts: Part 1, "Drug-Drug Interventions," contains 16 chapters that represent major groups of drugs (oral anticoagulants, anticonvulsants, and so forth). The clinical importance of the drug interaction is indicated by the three different type faces used: (1) Bold type—major clinical significance, interactions that are well documented or have the potential of being harmful to the patient; (2) Italic—moderate importance,