

Cecil Textbook of Medicine

20th ed, edited by J. Claude Bennett, Fred Plum, 2496 pp, \$105, ISBN 0-7216-3561-X (single volume), Philadelphia, Pa, WB Saunders Co, 1996.

With all of the recent scientific advances in medicine, it is refreshing to come across a textbook rich not only in medical science, but also in the ethical foundations of medicine. The *Cecil Textbook of Medicine* covers both brilliantly. The science is solid, and the human side of medicine is not forgotten.

The textbook is divided into 27 major parts, with a total of 477 chapters written by 415 contributing authors, and covers the full scope of general internal medicine. The "Table of Contents," use of references, and indexing are all excellent. I especially liked the use of briefly annotated references. At the end of most chapters instead of just listing the reference alone, a single sentence summary of the article or book is included. This saves time by directing the clinician to the most appropriate article for more in-depth study. The index has main discussion pages in bold print, and the inside front and back covers contain a useful table of contents, making it easy to look up information.

Important to family physicians is the textbook's emphasis on preventive medicine. A whole section is devoted to preventive health care, with separate subchapters about major topics such as smoking, exercise, and diet. The subchapter about exercise covers health benefits by disease category, the health risks of exercise, and, most importantly, counseling methods including a good discussion of exercise prescriptions.

What I enjoyed most about the textbook was its handling of geriatrics and related ethical issues. The chapter about care of dying patients and their families was quite re-

markable. I appreciated the author's compassionate approach to dying patients, and have integrated many of his methods into my own clinical practice. This chapter really had an emotional impact on me, something I have never experienced before while reading a textbook, regardless of the topic. I found myself thinking, "Yes, this is why I went into medicine." Quite a surprising thought to have while perusing a hefty tome of medicine.

All texts on medicine have gaps, and this textbook is no exception. For example, I recently had a patient with an acute intestinal obstruction. I could not locate a general discussion of this topic in the *Cecil Textbook of Medicine*, whereas *Harrison's Principles of Internal Medicine*¹ had an entire chapter devoted to the topic. It was also surprising not to find a chapter devoted to advanced cardiac life support, a topic essential to all practicing clinicians.

Overall, the *Cecil Textbook of Medicine* deserves strong consideration as being the primary medical textbook about medicine in any family practice clinic. Its coverage of the basic and clinical sciences is excellent, with only minor deficiencies. The price is reasonable, and it is well organized so topics can be found rapidly. Also, the human side of this textbook cannot be overlooked. It has been some time since I have undergone such a paradigm shift in my basic approach to patient care. Suffice it to say that the 20th edition of the *Cecil Textbook of Medicine* will have a lasting influence on my clinical practice long after the science has become out-of-date.

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1. Isselbacher KJ, Braunwald E, Wilson JD, Martin JB, Fauci AS, Kasper DL, eds. *Harrison's Principles of Internal Medicine*. 13th ed. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Book Co; 1994:1431-1433.

Novak's Gynecology

12th ed, edited by Jonathan S. Berek, MD, MMSc, Eli Y. Adashi, MD, Paula A. Hillard, MD, ISBN 0-683-00593-6, Baltimore, Md, Williams & Wilkins, 1996.

This edition has been written in a 1990s format. The book is divided into 6 sections, reflecting practice as we reach the year 2000. The editors want this book to remain a text for students, residents, and primary care specialists. Section 1, "Principles of Practice," includes information useful to the student including physical examination, communication skills, and an interesting chapter titled "Ethical Principles of Caring for the Female Patient." The second section is titled "Basic Sciences." These chapters summarize the scientific base for the specialty and are very useful as references. The third section, "Preventive and Primary Care," is a new section for Novak and is an attempt to reflect the importance of primary health care for women. The fourth section, "General Gynecology," reviews infections of the female reproductive tract, intraepithelial diseases, pain, and evaluation of benign breast disease. The fifth section is "Reproductive Endocrinology," which summarizes the normal and abnormal growth, development, and function of women from menarche through menopause. The sixth and last section, "Gynecologic Oncology," discusses malignant diseases of the female reproductive tract.

Although the section about primary medical care provides several algorithms for the treatment of common medical problems that are valuable to family physicians, it has many weaknesses. One of my least favorite comments is on page 203, in which the author suggests that if the diastolic blood pressure is greater than 110 mm Hg, referral to an "in-