

Book Reviews

Mechanism of Action of Benzodiazepines. EDITED BY E. COSTA AND P. GREENGARD. New York, Raven Press, 1975. Pages: 190. Price: \$14.50.

Ten papers presented at a symposium on benzodiazepines (December 1974 Annual Meeting of the American College of Neuropsychopharmacology) are the text of this book. The unifying theme is the neurochemical and neurophysiologic basis of these agents' therapeutic effects.

What emerges from the collective investigations is that benzodiazepines affect either the turnover or the membrane action, or both, of most suspected central nervous system neurotransmitters and second messengers. But these effects are largely the result of benzodiazepine action on gamma-aminobutyric acid-mediated presynaptic inhibition. This fact is presented in the book's preface and provides a helpful perspective.

In general, however, a lack of diagrams makes the papers difficult to read and digest; complex neuroanatomic connections are discussed, along with the complicated interactions of transmitter agonists and antagonists, as well as inhibitors of neurotransmitter synthesis and biotransformation. As the text stands, its effective audience is limited to those familiar with the current state of CNS neurotransmitter pharmacology. Anesthesiologists looking for a clear, concise discussion of the therapeutic value of benzodiazepines and how they affect the CNS should look elsewhere.

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General Urology. Eighth edition. By D. R. SMITH. Los Altos, Cal., Lange Medical Publications, 1975. Pages: 492. Price: \$10.50.

This reviewer has watched Don Smith's *General Urology* evolve over the years with admiration and envy. It started as an outline developed from notes taken at lectures given to medical students, but has long since far exceeded that original modest objective. It is probably the most popular general urological text available today, and deservedly so. The latest edition contains 50 more pages than the seventh edition of 1972, and the additions are most useful. The chapter on the adrenals has been almost completely revised to include excellent diagrams and tables of known enzymatic deficiencies that produce the adrenogenital syndromes. There is a new chapter on immunology of genitourinary tumors that is timely. Dr. Tonaglio has revised the section on the embryology of the genitourinary system and updated it.

Of particular interest to anesthesiologists are Chapter 3, which details the symptoms and somatic referral patterns of pain in the urinary tract (what other text gives the spinal levels for pain in the

glans penis?), the chapters on ultrasonic examination of the urinary tract, radioisotope kidney studies, urinary tract infection with specific reference to Antibiotic Dosage in Renal Failure, and the chapter on renal vascular hypertension.

As a relatively inexpensive compendium of urinary tract problems with up-to-date references, this is an unexcelled basic text for medical students, generalists, and specialists (including urologists).

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Pain Patients, Traits and Treatment. BY R. S. STERNBACH. New York, Academic Press, 1974. Pages: 135. Price: 9.50.

This book is indeed "a practical manual for the understanding and treatment of the patient in pain." As such, it is to be highly recommended as a guide for those of us treating chronic pain patients. However, because of the insight it gives into the nature of patients in general, it can also be recommended to all medical students in their early years of clinical training. All too frequently, the student's introduction to clinical matters is restricted to physical diagnosis, with very little information concerning the psychological management of patients, or understanding of the transactions taking place between physician and patient.

Dr. Sternbach has concisely put into words the experience and skills he has acquired from many years spent in dealing with the most difficult of all patients—the individual who chronically presents with pain complaints. The first part of his book concerns the pain patient, the experience of chronic pain, and the psychological changes produced by chronic pain. The chapter on psychogenic pain is uniquely valuable in clearing up much confusion now existing concerning those patients labeled psychological problems because of the lack of adequate physical findings to explain their problems on a somatogenic basis. The author discusses and gives examples of the relation of pain to hypochondriasis. His chapter on pain and depression will be particularly useful to the clinician for its practical classification and description of the depressions, and their diagnosis and management.

The chapter on pain transactions describes the interactions occurring between patient and physician. This will no doubt prove to be an eye-opener to many a physician, particularly to the beginning clinician.

The second part of the book relies heavily on the author's personal experience in diagnosis and treatment of chronic pain patients. The use of tourniquet test and the MMPI in diagnosis, and of patient-physician contracts, operant conditioning, cutaneous stimulation, and biofeedback in treatment