

## Book review

**Therapeutic Guidelines: Psychotropic. Version 5. Melbourne: Therapeutic Guidelines Limited; 2003. 338 pages. Price: \$33, students \$25.30, plus postage**

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It is an interesting experience to be asked to review a book that you have used previously. I have used earlier versions of this small book as a reference to look up specific details. I have now read this version in detail and am impressed with the depth and extent of coverage.

Any book discussing psychotropic medication has to determine how it will include non-pharmacological treatments that form such an important part of the treatment of mental health problems. Therapeutic Guidelines: Psychotropic takes the straightforward approach of indicating the importance of psychotherapy, but does not try to become a textbook of all possible treatment modalities. This works very well.

As an urban general practitioner with a special interest in mental health problems, I know and respect the sections on the use of antidepressant and anti-anxiety medications. Detailed reading of these sections produced some new elements of knowledge, such as the potential of nefazodone to cause hepatic damage. The sections on atypical antipsychotic medication impressed me. This is an area where general practitioners are being asked to take a more active role.

The section on behavioural emergencies was new to me and I not only found it very educational, but was left wishing it had been available when I was in rural practice.

The index works well and enabled me to check prescribing for a number of difficult patients. The only area of deficiency in this book is the lack of a section dealing with the complex comorbidities seen in general practice. It is the patients on multiple psychotropic medications, who also abuse alcohol or drugs and are pregnant, that tax the practitioner and any textbook.

This book should be in the library of, and used by, any doctor who prescribes psychotropic medication. It would also be valuable to medical students and non-medical staff involved in treating patients with mental health problems.

## New drugs

Some of the views expressed in the following notes on newly approved products should be regarded as tentative, as there may have been little experience in Australia of their safety or efficacy. However, the Editorial Committee believes that comments made in good faith at an early stage may still be of value. As a result of fuller experience, initial comments may need to be modified. The Committee is prepared to do this. Before new drugs are prescribed, the Committee believes it is important that full information is obtained either from the manufacturer's approved product information, a drug information centre or some other appropriate source.

### Insulin glargine

Lantus (Aventis Pharma)

100 IU/mL in 3 mL cartridges, and 5 mL and 10 mL vials

Approved indication: diabetes mellitus

Australian Medicines Handbook section 10.1.1

Insulin glargine is a recombinant insulin. Its chemical structure differs from human insulin by three amino acids. The molecule is completely soluble at pH4, but after injection it becomes less soluble. Microprecipitates form, and these allow a slow continuous release of insulin. These properties make a daily injection of insulin glargine suitable for providing a patient's basal insulin requirements.

In clinical trials insulin glargine had similar effects to NPH human insulin, but in some studies fewer patients experienced symptomatic hypoglycaemia. These trials were relatively short, so the long-term effectiveness of insulin glargine is currently unknown.

Patients may find insulin glargine more painful to inject because of its acidity. It should not be mixed with other insulins.

An analysis by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence in the UK concluded that while insulin glargine is an option for type 1 diabetes, it is not recommended for routine use in people with type 2 diabetes who require insulin.<sup>1</sup>

### Reference

1. National Institute for Clinical Excellence. Full guidance on the use of long-acting insulin analogues for the treatment of diabetes – insulin glargine. London: NICE; 2002. [http://www.nice.org.uk/pdf/53\\_Insulin\\_analogues\\_full\\_guidance.pdf](http://www.nice.org.uk/pdf/53_Insulin_analogues_full_guidance.pdf) [cited 2004 Feb]

### NEW FORMULATION

#### Azithromycin

Zithromax IV (Pfizer)

500 mg powder for solution for infusion in 10 mL glass vial