

Book reviews

Pregnancy and breastfeeding: medicines guide

Melbourne: Pharmacy Department, Royal Women's Hospital; 2010.

346 pages. Price \$93.50 incl postage, discount for bulk orders

David M Pache, *Senior clinical pharmacist, Mater Pharmacy Services, and Conjoint lecturer, School of Pharmacy, University of Queensland*

The Royal Women's Hospital of Melbourne has updated information previously published as two volumes ('Drugs and pregnancy' and 'Drugs and breastfeeding') to create this new, combined resource. It includes over 900 drugs available in Australia. This book is not a pocket-sized reference, however the ring-bound format means that it is easily left open on the desk.

Following the introduction and guidelines for use, the general medicines information section provides broad, but somewhat limited, details on selected pharmacotherapeutic classes.

Substances of dependence are included here, but drugs with therapeutic indications possess individual monographs (for example, compare amphetamine with dexamphetamine).

Interestingly, the topic of smoking is covered under the entry of nicotine.

Future volumes would be enhanced by expansion and referencing to pertinent sources in the bibliography located at the back. The table covering complementary and alternative medicines, though not exhaustive, is useful. An expanded version covering more herbal remedies had been included in the previous 'Drugs and pregnancy' edition, but this time implications for lactating mothers have been addressed.

Drugs are listed alphabetically. Preferences for arranging drug names tend towards their full description. For example, valproate is found under sodium valproate, rather than its parent acid and pharmacologically-active component. Abbreviations have been used throughout, but these are clearly explained in the 'Guidelines for use'.

This is a straightforward, no-nonsense reference tool that provides clear, succinct clinical information and advice on medications in respect of their use for pregnant and lactating women. The simplicity of presentation improves accessibility across health disciplines. Purists might decry the absence of detailed critical evaluation of significant trials, but this book is intended for health professionals requiring advice for immediate action. A brief perusal of the bibliography indicates references mostly sourced from the last decade with a clear attempt to be as up to date as possible for certain more sensitive topics, such as epilepsy.

In summary, a very useful, easily accessible tool, produced by an experienced team for health professionals faced with ever-increasing demands on their time.

Therapeutic Guidelines: Palliative Care. Version 3.

Melbourne: Therapeutic Guidelines Limited; 2010.

361 pages. Price \$39, students \$30, plus postage. Also available in electronic formats as eTG complete.

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The third edition of Therapeutic Guidelines: Palliative Care has been prepared by an expert group of experienced palliative care clinicians. This book is an excellent source of concise information about common palliative care problems encountered by health workers who are involved in the care of patients with a life threatening and terminal illness. It is a useful guide for those currently working in the field of palliative care, those undertaking training and clinicians who may occasionally provide palliative care for a patient.

The first few chapters present an easy to read overview of palliative care principles, the holistic approach to providing palliative care and a description of the multidisciplinary team

approach to modern palliative care. There are chapters, which cover the emotional, ethical, and communication challenges which face all those who care for patients at the end of life.

This also includes a chapter on the emotional care of health professionals in a field in which burnout and stress are all too common. An excellent chapter 'Pertinent practical points' gives expansive answers to frequently asked questions.

The largest part of the book deals with clinical management of common problems and gives an excellent overview of frequently used drugs. These drugs can be challenging to clinicians who primarily work outside palliative care. There are a number of drugs used 'off-label' and some unregistered drugs, such as cyclizine and levomepromazine, are obtained through the Special Access Scheme of the Therapeutic Goods Administration.

The final chapters cover the most common symptoms that patients present with, including pain, fatigue, gastrointestinal, respiratory and psychiatric symptoms. The approach of assessing and managing each symptom is systematic and well described.

This book is an excellent, succinct source of reliable palliative care information. It is also available in an electronic version, which includes all the supporting references.