

Preface

It is safe to say that few areas of medicine have moved faster than cardiac electrophysiology. In three short decades, our field has grown from its infancy to a highly sophisticated subspecialty of cardiology, complete with its own societies, scientific meetings, and board examination. Key to our successes has been a progressively more in-depth understanding of pathophysiology from our basic science laboratories. Burgeoning knowledge has been accompanied by a blitzkrieg of technology that has allowed us to treat what used to be lethal rhythm disturbances and to improve the quality of life of millions of people the world over. In 2010, we stand on the threshold of an even more impressive leap forward as we wrestle with defining how the genetic code predisposes to, or even causes, cardiac arrhythmias.

The price to pay for such rapid expansion of information is an ever-widening knowledge gap. It is obvious that practitioners who spend their time caring for patients find it difficult to keep up with the latest developments in our field. The number of articles and journals that come across our desks every month is mind numbing. And few have the sophistication to understand the myriad of discoveries that are unwrapped at each of our congresses. Clearly there is a need to have complex information presented in an efficient and user-friendly way.

We believe that condensed texts represent one of the best ways for colleagues to stay current. We also think that there are individuals in our field, as in any endeavor, who are particularly skilled in taking a complex mass of information, condensing and formulating it, and producing a state-of-the-art manuscript that makes clinical sense. Consequently, we agreed to recruit a stellar group of authors and edit the text you are about to read. Its organization is standard, proceeding from basic science to diagnostic and therapeutic techniques, before ending in a discussion of specific patient types and syndromes. We added an historical perspective that should be particularly gratifying to our younger readers. Since the time frame of development was short, the information is as current as possible and should bring the interested reader up to speed rather quickly. We have tried to feature issues that will be of continuing interest in our field over the next few years in order to provide a frame of reference for journal reading. Finally, we have kept the level of science high to appeal to physicians and health-care professionals, or those in training, who have a deep interest in cardiac arrhythmias.

There are several we would like to acknowledge and thank, including our colleagues who helped us with their knowledge and experience, our families who allowed us the time to write and edit, our staff who provided technical support, and the research foundations and granting agencies that keep us afloat. But most of all, we thank our patients who, by their courage and perseverance, inspire us to dig deeper so we can ultimately conquer the diseases that disrupt and end their lives.

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