
Preface

Libraries contain plenty of textbooks and manuals that are dedicated to the care of the critically ill and cover all aspects of treatment, with a particular focus on mechanical ventilation, cardiovascular and renal support, nutrition, and infection control. However, location of a text devoted to blood coagulation is more difficult, which seems surprising when one considers the growing interest in the multiple interactions linking the blood coagulation system to the inflammatory response and the difficulties in identifying and treating blood coagulation disturbances in patients with multiple organ dysfunctions. While large books on critical care and anesthesia typically include a chapter on this issue, it will inevitably be embedded among dozens of other chapters or sections and is likely to be difficult to look up at the bedside. We therefore wanted to fill this gap by providing the reader with a handbook which is both up-to-date and easy to consult. Its preparation passed through a variety of phases. Initially, we considered which are the most frequent issues to arise regarding blood coagulation during daily clinical rounds in the intensive care unit. Subsequently, we asked colleagues interested in the field to prepare one or more chapters relating to these issues. The choice of authors was based on their clinical experience, as we are convinced that only physicians with a hands-on attitude are able to recognize the needs of readers involved daily in the care of critically ill patients and to select those aspects essential to clinical practice. Individual sections are dedicated to the physiology of blood coagulation, laboratory evaluation, inborn defects, and alterations acquired under different conditions specific to critical diseases and the perioperative period. In addition, however, we wished to include chapters addressing (relatively) rare diseases such as the vasculitides, either because of the life-threatening multiple organ dysfunction that they cause or because of the difficulties encountered in their recognition.

Like everything in this era of rapidly growing knowledge, this book is destined to undergo rapid aging: as an example, the sad end of the saga of recombinant human-activated protein C prompted us to rewrite the section dedicated to this

substance. Against this background, it will be up to readers to decide whether an updated edition of this text is needed in the next few years; should this be the case, we shall do our best to revise the text suitably and with the same enthusiasm and commitment that we have devoted to this book.

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