

Preface

Pharmacology as taught to medical students and junior frontline providers has always been considered a subject difficult to grasp. Pharmacology textbooks and formularies are usually drug-centred. While clinical textbooks and treatment guidelines are disease-centred and provide treatment recommendations, they seldom discuss why these treatments are chosen. In addition, the nature and extent of the subject makes it difficult to be captured into a single book to meet the needs of providers. Gaps in knowledge occur in frontline providers as a result and this translates into gaps in care.

The contributors of this book realize the importance of closing this gap. We have focused on the pharmacological principles as they apply in the different clinical situations and highlight how they are best utilized in managing the ill patient. Whilst information about drugs is relevant in every pharmacology book, we have decided to pare it down to the minimum here, so that readers will not be distracted from the main purpose of this book. We hope to make them understand that while drugs administered are always with the aim of correcting or improving a physiological process in the body, the physiological changes and pathology in patients, particularly the acutely ill ones, can alter the effects of drugs and the body's responses to these drugs, sometimes dangerously. Ultimately, frontline providers should be able to use knowledge of pharmacology to provide maximum benefit and minimum harm to our acutely ill patients, who are most at risk of adverse drug events.

As pharmacology is second nature to all the authors, the majority of whom are practicing clinicians, we hope to share our wealth of experience to make this vast knowledge available to providers in a way that is as realistic and clinically relevant as possible. This will hopefully shorten the learning curves of those who strive to do their best in the most difficult of conditions, i.e. to master the proper use of medication and drug resources to allow the body to heal.

We have also taken the extra step of including information applicable to acute care situations where appropriate decisions must be made within short time frames. Equipping oneself with the correct principles in this aspect of pharmacology will allow the provider to manage these critically ill patients effectively and safely.

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