

Preface

As epileptologists, each day Mona and I answer questions from women with epilepsy: “Will this medicine harm my baby?” “Will I be able to drive if I change medications?” “Will the seizures come back?” For each woman the stakes are high. As much as we wish for a single correct answer, the truth is that there exist multiple appropriate treatment approaches. We have created this book to explore expert guidance for office scenarios that are common, yet challenging. Since variation does exist even among experts, we are providing two expert approaches to the same vignette. It is our intent that this will be even more helpful than a single expert offering and will provide a well-rounded exploration of a specific medical situation in which a woman with epilepsy is seeking guidance. The reader can think about what considerations and decision pathways they take from each review. For example, management of a woman of reproductive age with juvenile myoclonic epilepsy is always at the top of the list of clinical conundrums. We have spun this scenario in many directions for our authors’ input; for example, (1) the JME patient is stable taking valproate but has never tried any other antiseizure drugs, (2) the JME patient has failed all other antiseizure medications and is stable on valproate, and (3) the JME patient discovers that she is pregnant (9 weeks) and is stable on valproate.

Over the course of editing, Mona and I had the distinct pleasure of being a “fly on the wall” during the imaginary office visit. We have gained entrance onto the personal and warm conversations that the expert would have with the patient and family. Further, we are provided with the knowledge-based underpinnings for these discussions, and that is where it gets really interesting. All of the authors had strategies, algorithms, and supportive data for their decisions. The surprise is that many authors reached the same or similar conclusions based on differing sets of scientific evidence.

We are grateful to our contributors to agreeing to this format. Within a chapter, the specific review is not attributed to a specific author, but each author gets credit for the chapter. Therefore, we have implicitly gotten the authors to agree to disagree, should their responses differ. I will not reveal more about the “Controversies”

in this preface, and I am sure that you will enjoy these short and to-the-point chapters and learn from them. I hope you will feel transported like I did to be actually in the room with an esteemed expert (although you won't know which one of the two it is!).

My respect and admiration for my contributing colleagues grows even greater now because I see how they work in an era in which obstacles to the therapeutic relationship are increasingly introduced. I would score all of the contributors at 100 % on any feedback scale for their impervious compassion and wisdom. Please allow this book to enrich your knowledge and enlarge your world a bit as you navigate through the "Controversies."

New York, NY

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Controversies in Caring for Women with Epilepsy

Sorting Through the Evidence

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2016, XIII, 173 p. 18 illus., 10 illus. in color., Hardcover

ISBN: 978-3-319-29168-0