

Fundamentals of Geriatric Pharmacotherapy: An Evidence-Based Approach

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Although a number of textbooks for geriatric medicine are available, few resources focus on geriatric pharmacotherapy. Similarly, the most commonly used pharmacy texts may have just one chapter, if any, on geriatrics, and the most recent edition of *Therapeutics in the Elderly* was published in 2003 (by Harvey Whitney Books Company). This situation makes the new text edited by Hutchinson and Sleeper particularly valuable for current pharmacy practice.

The book is divided into 2 sections. The first section, entitled “Social, Ethical, and Economic Issues of Aging”, tackles issues such as challenges in geriatric care, care-giving, decision making, and end-of-life care. Other textbooks in geriatrics provide comprehensive reviews of all of the topics. *Fundamentals of Geriatric Pharmacotherapy* provide summaries that are brief, but current and relevant. For example, the topic of elder abuse is condensed to 1 page.

The second section, entitled “General Biomedical and Pharmacotherapy Issues”, contains 14 chapters. The first 4 of these chapters relate to general geriatric practice (e.g. geriatric assessment), and the remaining chapters relate to specific systems or specialties (e.g., cardiology). Each chapter opens with learning objectives and definitions. References are included at the end of each chapter, in contrast to some of the leading geriatric texts, which provide only brief bibliographies. At the end of each chapter, there is a set of self assessment questions, which vary in format. Chapter summaries and clinical pearls are also included.

What makes this text stand out is its use of case studies and application of information throughout each chapter. The case studies are complex and realistic, each covering 1 to 2 pages. A summary of each case is included, and key learning points are highlighted. The cases involve settings such as continuing care centres and conditions such as urinary incontinence, cachexia, dysphagia, and sensory impairment. These are common geriatric challenges that are rarely addressed in general pharmacy texts.

Most of the content is specific to the elderly population, but some chapters include general information, such as categories of adverse events, a list of abbreviations that should not be used, or the epidemiology of disease states for the general population. These topics should be familiar to most pharmacists or could be obtained from other general practice texts.

Readers might find it challenging to locate some of the information in the book. For example, vaccination is covered in the respiratory chapter (there is no infectious diseases chapter), erectile dysfunction appears under endocrinology (rather than urology), and the topic of pain is covered in several different chapters.

The editors and most of the authors are well-known experts in geriatrics. As can be expected for a book published by ASHP, the editors and authors are US practitioners, and the anticipated audience is American. Only US guidelines are referenced, and the book does not use SI units. However, international literature is cited throughout the text.

Practitioners will find the text easy to navigate. The content focuses on therapeutics, and pharmacists will sense that they represent the primary audience. The text will be useful for teaching, both in the classroom and in practice. For those already working in geriatrics, the book will provide a useful overview. This text, surprisingly inexpensive, would be a valuable resource for any health professional in geriatrics, particularly pharmacists.

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Reviews/Testimonials

Fundamentals of Geriatric Pharmacotherapy: An Evidence-Based Approach

Lisa C. Hutchison, PharmD, MPH, BCPS; Rebecca B. Sleeper, PharmD, FASCP, BCPS
ISBN: 978-1-58528-228-9, 463 pages, soft cover.

REVIEWER'S EXPERT OPINION

by Susan C Kent, PharmD (Temple University School of Pharmacy)

Description

This is a valuable and much needed book for pharmacy practitioners caring for geriatric patients. Intended as a textbook for pharmacy students, each chapter contains clear objectives, defines key terms, provides clinical pearls and case studies, and includes chapter summaries as well as self-assessment questions.

Purpose

The book builds on knowledge gained from a general pharmacotherapy textbook. A previous foundation in disease-specific pathophysiology and pharmacology is assumed, allowing the authors to focus on evidence-based pharmacotherapy specific to elderly patients. Although designed as a textbook for pharmacy students, practicing pharmacists and other healthcare providers will find this useful, especially given the dearth of geriatric-trained practitioners. In addition to pharmacotherapy, general psychosocial, economic, and quality of life issues are presented, which can be equally as important as choosing the correct medication for a given disease. This is a much needed book because there is limited clinical literature guiding treatment of many disease states in the geriatric population. The elderly are often excluded from clinical trials, forcing treatment decisions to be made from the general adult literature or guidelines. Medication management is crucial, especially in this population, and this book attempts to provide as much scientific evidence as is currently available.

Audience

It is designed primarily for pharmacy students for use in an elective or required course focused on geriatric pharmacotherapy. However, the authors suggest that practicing pharmacists and other providers wanting to learn more about caring for geriatric patients also will find the book useful, and I agree. I plan to incorporate parts of this book into my geriatric lectures and would recommend it as required reading for a geriatric elective. The authors are authorities on geriatrics, active in the American College of Clinical Pharmacy's Practice and Research Network, and dedicated to enlightening those of us who strive to provide quality care to older patients.

Features

The first of the book's two sections reviews general concepts, pharmacokinetic and pharmacodynamic changes, who cares for the elderly, living options, advanced directives, geriatric assessments, adverse drug events, and polypharmacy issues. Section two covers common disease states encountered in the geriatric population. Each chapter follows a similar format, reviews age-specific epidemiology, and provides evidence for treatment across the aging continuum. Chapters begin with concise learning objectives and a mini-glossary of relevant terms for the chapter, as opposed to a glossary in the back of the book. The book provides a very comprehensive review of important concepts that are unique in this population, as well as specific disease-state guidelines and recommendations. The chapter on ethical and socioeconomic considerations presents topics not routinely taught to students and gives readers an

appreciation of when not to give a drug, how to approach end of life care, and the ethical issues surrounding many of these tough decisions. When appropriate, graphs, drug-dosing charts, and examples of validated assessment tools are included. Clinical pearls and key points are unique features that are used frequently throughout the chapters. These useful clinical insights are not necessarily found in the medical literature. The case scenarios and self-assessment questions are also a valuable addition. The cases are set up in similar fashion to SOAP notes that pharmacy students should be accustomed to writing. The patient cases represent real-life examples in a variety of clinical settings to demonstrate the complexity of caring for geriatric patients and the decision-making challenges facing families and providers.

Assessment

This is a much needed review of available clinical evidence for disease states encountered in the geriatric population. Many general pharmacotherapy textbooks devote little space exclusively to the unique characteristics and medication management needs of older patients. A publication of the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists, this book is well referenced and includes a host of contributors and reviewers with expertise in geriatric care.

Weighted Numerical Score: 98 - 5 Stars!