

some chapters they show extensive shadowing, are too dark, or are out of focus. This is especially true of the photomicrographs in the chapters on the liver and the placenta.

In general, the references in each of the chapters include the major papers on the entities discussed. Many of the references are from the late 1980s or early 1990s, with a few from 1994 and 1995.

There are many good points to this book, and the individual chapters noted earlier make it a worthwhile addition to a pathology library. The book will not, however, replace the textbooks on general surgical pathology often found in the personal libraries of pathologists.

VIRGINIA A. LIVOLSI, M.D.

University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine
Philadelphia, PA 19104

CLINICAL PHARMACOLOGY: AN INTERACTIVE DRUG
REFERENCE AND TEACHING GUIDE

CD-ROM or diskettes with manual and binder. By Stan Reents and
Jon Seymour. System needed: Multimedia IBM PC or compatible,
with 37 MB of hard-disk space. (Also available for multimedia
Macintosh with at least 27 MB of hard-disk space and 4 MB of
RAM.) Gainesville, Fla., Gold Standard Multimedia, 1995.

\$295 yearly subscription with quarterly updates.

ISBN 1-885966-07-5.

THE superior searching capabilities and fast retrieval of computerized drug data bases are important for routine clinical work. Their incorporation into the hectic environment of the medical office and hospital unit can make the difference between depending on one's often blurred memory and having access to reliable data. We found this clinically oriented, relatively inexpensive package attractive for both office and unit settings. We especially recommend it for teaching and residency programs.

The drug monographs on this CD-ROM are clinically oriented, clear, and concise. Inexperienced users can master the basics within half an hour or so. The "program map" is the heart of this program. It contains icons for almost any topic one could possibly look for, including an alphabetical index, information on combination drugs, product identification, a quiz option, data on intravenous compatibility, an index of indications and contraindications, a patient record, costs, and monographs, in which a well-designed screen provides access to all the relevant information on the chosen medication.

A useful feature of the package is that it includes not only a drawing of the chemical formula for each drug, but also a high-quality, life-size color photograph. In addition, the product-identification feature can identify and verify products by their appearance. For example, suppose a patient said he was taking a "green and gray" antibiotic capsule, but the product-identification feature did not identify such an antibiotic, mentioning Prozac (fluoxetine) as the only match. The patient could then identify the medication on the basis of the color photograph shown on the screen.

The section on terms and definitions contains descriptive information on items such as pregnancy-associated risk categories and Drug Enforcement Administration

schedules of controlled substances. Other features of the package include references for controversial or less-well-known topics and configuration options that make it possible to create log files, backups, and passwords. The section called "what's new" is useful when quarterly updates are received. Patient records, containing a medical profile and medication list, can be kept. On request, a report can be prepared with such information as additive adverse reactions and costs. It is also possible to prepare prescriptions from the patient's record.

Cost information is important when considering alternative medications. The cost of therapy in dollars per day is provided for each dosage and route of administration. Monitoring tests required for patients receiving a particular drug are also listed. Information is kept current by a quarterly update of the package. A "patient information" feature provides counseling information on each medication in simple language. This, as well as other sections of the monograph, can be readily printed.

It is possible to download the contents of the CD-ROM to the hard disk. At the expense of 38 megabytes of hard-disk space, this option speeds up the system and provides access to the drug data base even when other CD-ROMs are in use.

In addition to the standard telephone and fax numbers provided for technical support, Gold Standard Multimedia offers support on the Internet. We surfed the Web site at <http://www.gsm.com> and found valuable introductory information, as well as the option of ordering a free demonstration version of the CD-ROM package.

EYTAN Z. BLUMENTHAL, M.D.

DANIEL MIMOUNI, M.D.

Hadassah University Hospital
Jerusalem, Israel 91120

EXPERIENCES NEAR DEATH: BEYOND MEDICINE
AND RELIGION

By Allan Kellehear. 230 pp. New York, Oxford University Press,
1995. \$25.

ISBN 0-19-509194-9.

I was sitting around minding my own business when Death — in the form of Allan Kellehear's new book — tapped me on the shoulder. Thinking of my own near miss (1991, back seat of a runaway Checker taxi), I picked up *Experiences near Death* for more clues to the meaning of life.

Kellehear is an Australian sociologist specializing in health, death, and dying. He considers not just garden-variety near-death experiences (like those associated with cardiopulmonary resuscitation) but also other near misses. Shipwrecks, mining disasters, and mountaineering mishaps are all touched on in his attempt to get "beyond medicine and religion."

Most people are aware of the classic descriptions of near-death: people have an out-of-body experience in which they are tunneling toward the light and reviewing their lives; there is an angelic presence and a feeling of bliss; then they return to the living with a newfound attitude toward life. Kellehear adds to these some curious examples