

BOOK REVIEW

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A Review of "Clinical Toxicology"

REFERENCE: Thienes, C. H. and Haley, T. J., *Clinical Toxicology*, Lea and Febiger, 5th ed., Philadelphia, 1972, 459 pages, \$18.50.

A book combining the clinical and laboratory aspects of drug overdose or poisoning is always a welcome addition to the scientific and medical literature. The author(s) abandoned the original tenet "a book to be readily useful should be small." The 5th edition follows the format of the previous ones, but it has been enlarged with much new material.

In the first part of the book, drugs or poisons which produce a characteristic or particular symptom make up the clinical diagnosis portion. Although the drugs and poisons described in this book are those which most frequently give rise to a certain type of distressing symptoms or pathologic conditions, it is obvious that many of the drugs will produce similar or identical symptoms. In most emergency cases it is likely to be of limited value.

There have been great advances in analytical methods and these have received their share of attention in the procedures detailed for the identification of drugs in the second part of the book. The analytical methods are well presented and supported by an appropriate number of well chosen illustrations. It is comforting and reassuring to find that more than one method is described for the identifications and confirmation of a particular drug or poison. This is a highly commendable feature.

One of the less notable features of the book is the large number of color tests, micro-crystalline tests, and melting point determinations enumerated for the identification of drugs. These types of analytical procedures have a restricted usefulness due to the fact that most drugs are altered in the body, and the intact drug remaining usually cannot be isolated from the tissues and fluids with a degree of purity that would lend reliance to these types of identifying tests. Many drug metabolites or drug conjugates cannot be distinguished from the parent drug by simple chemical and physical tests. There is an increasing frequency of multiple drug usage and the reliability of these types of tests are again of questionable value when drug mixtures are encountered. This is an area where extreme caution is required, particularly for the beginner or the inexperienced.

It would have been advantageous to have the fate and excretion of the drugs discussed in the section on chemical diagnosis of poisoning instead of in the section on clinical

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symptomology, since this information furnishes useful help on the most suitable samples to select for analysis or which metabolites may be encountered and isolated in addition to the unaltered drug.

The book is highly informative and is a valuable contribution to clinical toxicology. It could serve as a classroom text in clinical toxicology. I highly recommend this book to the student and the physician without reservation.