

Physician's Bookshelf

Book Review

Diagnosis and Nonsurgical Management of Osteoarthritis

By Kenneth D. Brandt, Pp. 225. Price \$17.95. Professional Communications, 400 Center Bay Dr., West Islip, NY 11795, 1996.

This handbook fills a need for a well-designed, succinct, authoritative handbook on osteoarthritis for primary care physicians. Kenneth Brandt is one of a few internationally recognized authorities on the topic of osteoarthritis. His experience, in the basic science aspects of understanding this disease, in studying the epidemiology and clinical manifestations of the disease and in carefully designed studies on how to educate primary care physicians and trainees about this and other rheumatologic topics, comes together in this handbook to provide a valuable resource.

The book is small, well organized and designed to fit easily into a jacket or coat pocket. Despite its compact size, it really contains most, if not all, of the information that a primary care physician needs to know about this most common of rheumatologic diseases. It is amply illustrated and laid out with well-designed tables to succinctly deliver practical information that is easily accessible and easy to read. It is modern, up-to-date, and all of the statements that are made are well referenced. The only thing not included in this book is the recently published American College of Rheumatology guidelines for treatment of osteoarthritis of the knee and hip. However, these approaches, although not referenced, are covered in the handbook.

The book begins with four chapters of general information covering a definition, epidemiology, pathology and pathogenesis of the disease. Very useful tables are included in these chapters, which feature most of the information that a physician needs to know about these areas.

Part II, the diagnosis of osteoarthritis, includes a chapter outlining the clinical features of the disease, followed by a particularly useful chapter on the pitfalls of diagnosis. This latter chapter includes some useful case presentations which allow the clinician to relate to problems commonly seen in the office. In addition to these two chapters, there are important chapters on the analysis of synovial fluid and on the imaging of the joints.

Part III is extremely useful for the primary care physician. It covers the therapy for osteoarthritis, beginning with a chapter on nonmedicinal therapy. This chapter outlines the important aspects of exercise, joint protection, the activities of daily living, and the various physical modalities that may help and actually preclude the need for pharmacologic therapy. The next chapter covers drug therapy and emphasizes the fact that potentially toxic nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, while useful, are not the initial recommended therapeutic option. Careful, scientifically derived data to support this approach are presented. The appropriate monitoring and choice of the individual drugs are very simply presented in the appropriate manner. A brief chapter on alternative therapy outlines the use of electromagnetic fields and transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS) therapy. Finally, there are two chapters on surgical intervention and the future of therapy in

osteoarthritis and the emerging study of disease-modifying drugs.

The final section is the conclusion, which reviews a rational strategy for the management of osteoarthritis. As a specialist in this area, I find this book a useful day-to-day reference for myself, my trainees and my student. I also find the book to be one of the best, up-to-date and most affordable resources on the market. It will be used frequently in the office of a busy primary care physician. Incidentally, the book is well illustrated in both color and black and white illustrations. It is highly recommended as a resource for family physicians, internists, geriatricians and trainees in primary care specialties.

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