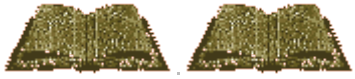
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Technical Books Section

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TWO EXCELLENT BOOKS ON MEDICINAL DRUGS

Drug Facts and Comparisons, Pocket Version 2002, 6th Edition *by* A Board of Editors
Facts and Comparisons, (A Wolters Kluwer Company) 111, West Port Plaza Drive, Suite 300, St. Louis, MO 63146-3098; . ; x + 1141 pages: ISBN 1-57439-115-1. Publication Date 2001: Price, $59.95.



The pharmaceutical world has seen an explosion of new drugs lately. Almost daily new chemical molecules are being explored for possible use in diagnosis and treatment. Many of them eventually come to the market for use. This has led to accumulation of a mass of data which needs to be organized properly.

The book under review attempts to categorize the major drugs by their usages. In this way, similar drugs can be compared and contrasted. Drugs in this book are arranged in thirteen sections, each dealing with a drug acting on a particular organ system. Furthermore, the drugs within that section are further sub-classified by their specific action. For instance in the section on Cardiovascular Agents (section 4), there are sections on Cardiac Glycosides, Antianginal Agents, Antiarrhythmic Agents, Calcium Channel Blockers, Beta blockers, Antihypertensives, Antihyperlipidemics and so on. Individual drugs are then discussed under the relevant sub section.

A complete monograph has been devoted to each drug. Each drug is discussed in twelve clearly defined sections. These are (i)Therapeutic Class (ii)Drug name (iii)Product table (iv)Warning box (v)Indications (vi)Administration and Dosage (vii)Actions (viii)Contraindications (ix)Warnings (x)Precautions (xi) Drug interactions and (xii)Adverse reactions.

When treated in this way, information about each drug becomes easily comprehensible. Let us take the example of Tramadol HCl, which appears on page 459, in chapter 7 on Central Nervous System Agents. Tramadol is a Central Analgesic, and this information appears at top right. This indicates its therapeutic class. The drug name appears next, which of course is TRAMADOL HCL. This appears as a large white font written on a black ribbon, which makes it very prominently visible.

A full listing of the Contents of the 6th Edition of *Drug Facts and Comparisons*

Table of contents

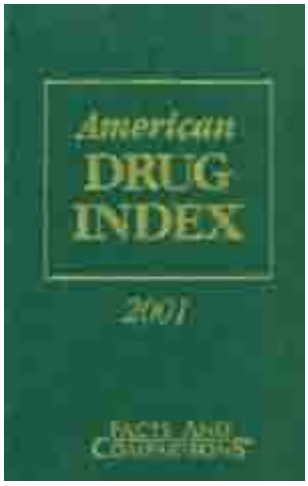
1. Nutrients and Nutritional Agents
2. Hematological Agents
3. Endocrine and Metabolic Agents
4. Cardiovascular Agents
5. Renal and Genitourinary Agents
6. Respiratory Agents
7. Central Nervous System Agents
8. Gastrointestinal Agents
9. Systemic Anti-Infective Agents
10.Biologic and Immunologic Agents
11.Dermatological Agents
12.Ophthalmic and Otic Agents
13.Antineoplastic Agents

Product table is a small ribbon in white appearing parallel to the black ribbon just mentioned. In this ribbon, doseforms and strengths of generic drugs are listed on the left column with their schedules. If the drug can only be obtained on prescription, the symbol R_x appears on the left hand side. Drugs available *over the counter* are marked as "otc". Drugs appearing in various DEA schedules have been marked as c-i, c-ii, c-iii, c-iv and c-v (Drug Enforcement Agency, or DEA, within the US Department of Justice is the chief federal agency responsible for enforcing The Controlled Substances Act of 1970. It has five schedules listing various drugs of abuse. For instance, Schedule I (c-i drugs) have a high abuse potential and no accepted medical use, such as heroin, marijuana or LSD. Similarly other schedules include different drugs). The drug ALFENTANIL HCL, (listed on page 432) is a schedule II drug, and quite rightly, the symbol c-ii appears in the product table. Warning boxes appear under several entries, but not under all. These are basically a listing of life-threatening reactions specified in the product labeling.

All FDA approved indications appear next. In some cases, off-label uses with substantial documentation appear under the term "Unlabeled uses". For instance, on page 297, some "Unlabeled uses" of *Captopril*, and ACE inhibitor are mentioned. These are Rheumatoid arthritis, diagnosis of renal artery stenosis (*captopril test*), Idiopathic edema, Bartter's syndrome and Raynaud's syndrome, to name a few. Administration and dosage appear next, and then comes a brief discussion of significant pharmacologic and pharmacokinetic information. Under the heading Contraindications, all important contraindications are listed. Subsequent sections entitled *Warnings, Precautions, Drug Interactions* and *Adverse reactions* describe relevant information.

All in all a very useful reference work. This book should prove very useful for pharmacologists, pharmacists, nurses, health care administrators, physicians, dentists, and students and teachers in the fields incorporating pharmaceuticals. I, as a forensic pathologist and a clinical forensic physician, would make good use of this book, when facing a case of overdose with any of the clinical therapeutic agents.

American Drug Index, 45th Edition *by* Normal F. Billups and Shirley M.Billups (Associate Editor)
Facts and Comparisons, (A Wolters Kluwer Company) 111, West Port Plaza Drive, Suite 300, St. Louis, MO 63146-3098; . ; xiv + 1025 pages: ISBN 1-57439-073-2. Library of Congress Control No. 55-6286. Publication Date 2001: Price, $59.95.



In many ways, this book is complimentary to the above book. While the drugs are listed by their use in the above book, in this book they are listed alphabetically. This is a different approach to describe drugs. Being dictionary style, many users would find this approach quite useful, especially when they are researching some exotic drug, say, *cryptosporidium parvum bovine immunoglobulin concentrate*. All one has to do, is to go to this term searching in quite a dictionary style. This dictionary style has been used successfully by another book we have reviewed earlier (Drug effects on Psychomotor Performance).

A full listing of the Contents of the 45th Edition of *American Drug Index, 2001*

Table of contents

1. Monographs
2. Standard Medical Abbreviations
3. Calculations
4. Common Systems of Weights and Measures
5. Approximate Practical Equivalents
6. International System of Units

7. Normal Laboratory Values
8. Trademark Glossary
9. Medical Terminology Glossary
10.Container Requirements for U.S.P. 24 Drugs
11.Container and Storage Requirements for Sterile U.S.P. 24 Drugs
12.Oral Dosage Forms that should not be crushed or chewed
13.Drug names that look alike and sound alike
14.Recommended childhood Immunization Schedule
15.FDA pregnancy categories
16.Controlled Substances Summary
17.Radio-Contrast Media
18.Radio-isotopes
19.Agents for Imaging
20.Pharmaceutical Company Labeler Code Index
21.Pharmaceutical Manufacturer and Drug Distributor Listing

To be sure, the information given under each drug is not as extensive as in the previous book, but the book does serve to place the drug in the right perspective in the reader's mind. For instance if you are looking for information on, say, *Pathilon*, you first look up the drug in the normal dictionary style. Once you are at the entry, you are informed that it is made by *ESI Lederle Generics*, contains tridihexethyl chloride, comes in a bottle of 100 tablets, each weighing 25 mg, available only on the prescription of a doctor and its main use is as an anticholinergic and antispasmodic. All this information is given in just 4 lines (on page 593 incidentally). It is indeed surprising that the editors have managed to pack so much information is such little space. If the reader wants further information, this should present no difficulty to him. He can either refer to the book above, or if he wants to go in real detail he can resort to some extensive pharmaceutical text. Once his main problem of placing the drug in the right context is solved, he can go on to explore the drug further.

The book has twenty one different sections (please see the adjoining box for a full listing of contents). The major section of course is the first one giving monographs of various drugs. Rest of the sections provide useful information, which is often hard to locate otherwise. This reviewer read with interest the section entitled "Drug names that look alike and sound alike". This has been written by Neil M. Davis, President of Safe Medication Practices Consulting, 1143 Wright Drive, Huntingdon Valley, PA-19006. The section is an eye-opener. Sample these pairs: Artane and Anturane, Butalbital and Butabarbital, Capastat and Cepastat, Dalmane and Demulen, enalapril and Eldepril, Feridex and Fertinex, glucagon and Glaucon. They sound so similar, if you were not paying attention, you could easily mistake one for the other. The editors have done well to include this chapter. Nurses and other paramedics would find this chapter very useful, especially when dispensing medications. Several medicolegal cases are already on record, when a wrong drug was dispensed in error. Mistakes mostly occur because of the wrongly administered drug sounding very similar to the intended drug.

The section on Trademark Glossary is very interesting too. Try this quiz: What is a Caplet? Or Filmtab? Or Kapseal? Well, these are Capsule-shaped tablet, a Film-coated tablet and a Banded (sealed) capsule respectively. Several similar terms make very interesting reading.

Who would find the book most useful? I would imagine that pharmacologists, pharmacists, nurses, health care administrators, physicians, dentists, students and teachers in the fields incorporating

pharmaceuticals would find the book quite hard to resist. In addition, even Medical transcriptionists and sales personnel would find it very useful. Fully recommended to all of them.

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