

COLONIC DISEASES

Edited by Timothy R. Koch. 553 pp., illustrated.
Totowa, N.J., Humana Press, 2003. \$175.
ISBN 0-89603-961-7.

MOST BOOKS THAT COME MY WAY THESE days end up on a shelf gathering dust and are seldom if ever consulted after an initial inspection. For many clinicians and basic scientists, the preferred method of retrieving information and reference data is with the use of a computer terminal. At first glance, I assumed the book edited by Koch would probably have a fate similar to that of the rest of my office library. But no. Here is a collection of chapters that I will recommend for use by trainee clinician-scientists and by basic scientists who desire a perspective on their work — a bridge between basic and clinical research. Providing such a bridge is the main objective of this book. To that end, it succeeds admirably.

The book is an attractive, high-quality production, well illustrated and comprehensively referenced. Despite its title, only about a third of the book deals with a description of colonic diseases; the remainder deals with aspects of colonic physiology and the investigation into disease processes. Most of the authors of the 33 chapters are widely recognized for their expertise and contributions. This expertise is reflected in the writing, which is generally succinct, clear, and of a high standard.

Although this collection includes chapters that one expects to find in traditional textbooks, it also covers topics that are more difficult to find in such books. For example, the chapter on the interpretation of colonic biopsies will be useful to many readers and is likely to help improve communication between clinicians and pathologists. Similarly, an entire chapter dedicated to epidemiologic studies and outcomes research will be of use to clinical and scientific readers whether they are conducting research or attempting to interpret it. A chapter on the physiology and pathophysiology of colorectal sensory processes provides an anchoring perspective for subsequent chapters on disease processes such as irritable bowel syndrome. Other useful information that is often buried in large, conventional textbooks is covered in chapters dedicated to colonic lymphatics, aging, and mucins.

Most of the information is current, although I was disappointed by some omissions. The chapter on Crohn's disease should have included current information on the NOD2/CARD15 mutation, and the



Crohn's Colitis

Photograph courtesy of Dr. Andres Gelrud.

chapters on immunology and inflammation would benefit from a better discussion of the innate immune system and Toll-like receptors. Notwithstanding such notable drawbacks, the book provides the reader with a crisp, readable account of the contribution of basic scientific endeavor to modern gastroenterology.

That gastroenterology in general and colorectal physiology and pathophysiology in particular have emerged as exciting fields that are rich with scientific advances at both the research bench and the bedside is well illustrated in this book. For those in the field of colonic disorders who have become jaded by the use of unwieldy textbooks and computer terminals, this book is refreshingly manageable, easy to read, and generally filled with useful information.

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CORRECTION

Subcutaneous Fondaparinux versus Intravenous Unfractionated Heparin in the Initial Treatment of Pulmonary Embolism (October 30, 2003;349:1695-702). On page 1702, in the Appendix, the list of participating investigators should have included A. Palla in Pisa, Italy.