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Asthma in Focus

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Book Review: Asthma in Focus

By Anna Murphy MSc MRPharmS. Published by Pharmaceutical Press, London, UK, 2007. ISBN 978- 0-85369-647-6. Clothbound, xviii + 286 pp. (24 × 16cm), \$49.95. www.pharmpress.com

Therapeutic Area: The pathophysiology, diagnosis, and treatment of acute and chronic asthma constitute the therapeutic area explored by the author.

Format: This is a hardcover book complete with table of contents, appendix, glossary, and index. It also includes tables, diagrams, and figures.

Audience: This resource is intended for use by specialist and nonspecialist pharmacists, as well as students who require a clear understanding of basic asthma management. The focus is on pharmaceutical management and care; however, the text would also be useful for general internists who desire a more thorough knowledge and understanding of asthma. It is not intended for practitioners or researchers requiring specific, detailed therapeutic information.

Purpose: Designed to provide a comprehensive review of asthma for pharmacists in all areas of the profession, the book serves as a general reference for asthma management. The author explains general pathogenesis, diagnosis, and management of asthma, followed by more in-depth discussion of various treatment options and guidelines. She references the British Thoracic Society and the Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network (BTS/SIGN). In the preface, the author stressed that the information was up-to-date at the time of publication, but practitioners should consult the most recent literature for complete treatment recommendations and current information about medication prescribing.

Content: The book is organized into 17 chapters, with various topics discussed within each chapter. It begins with an overview of asthma, in which the pathogenesis, risk factors, and diagnosis of asthma are discussed. Pharmacologic management of chronic and acute asthma and lifestyle modifications are addressed in Chapters 3 and 4. Other areas of focus include disease state monitoring, drug delivery, patient education, and asthma in pregnancy. Individual chapters for each medication class, including β_2 - agonists, anticholinergics, corticosteroids, methylxanthines, leukotriene receptor antagonists, and upcoming therapies address mechanism of action, properties, route and dose, contraindications, adverse effects, drug interactions, and preparations available. This book concludes with chapters that address compliance and the role of the pharmacist in asthma management. An appendix lists asthma indicators in the general medical service contract, including points and maximum threshold for each indicator.

Usability: This book provides detailed drug information and up-to-date BTS/SIGN guideline recommendations. It is priced appropriately when compared with other books in the In Focus series.

Highlights: The best features of *Asthma in Focus* are its helpful diagrams, tables, and figures, used throughout the book. In addition to the diagrams, each chapter has several “Focus Points” boxes that contain key points and “clinical pearls” of asthma practice. The ending chapter, which details the role of the pharmacist, provides several checklists to recap the information in the book and lists reference pages for “Focus Points” and explanations given in earlier chapters.

Limitations: The most notable limitation of this book is its focus on practice in the UK. All statistics provided were specific to the UK, and the guidelines cited were BTS/SIGN, offering no reference to the National Asthma Education and Prevention Program (NAEPP) guidelines. Differences between the guidelines are slight; information varies primarily in medications recommended. Additionally, all descriptive units are in the metric system, with no conversion to standard units. This could lead to misunderstanding for non-European pharmacists and students using this book as a reference.

Comparison with Other Related Books or Products: *Asthma in Focus* provides a general overview of asthma and its treatment options. Use in non-European countries will be limited by available drug therapies and corresponding guideline recommendations.

Reviewer's Summary: I would recommend this reference for European pharmacy students and clinical pharmacists who need a clear and concise explanation of asthma and the therapies used for management. Pharmacy students in non-European areas would find the NAEPP guidelines a more suitable reference for acute and chronic asthma management.

Reviewers: Shaunta' M Ray PharmD, Assistant Professor, College of Pharmacy, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tennessee; and Sarah A Nisly PharmD, at time of writing, Specialty Resident—Internal Medicine, University of Tennessee Medical Center, Knoxville; now, Assistant Professor, College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences Center, Butler University, Indianapolis, Indiana