Book review

G. Berg and M. Hammar [Editors]

This book contains the most important lectures from the invited speakers on the VII International Congress on the Menopause, and gives an impressive comprehensive overview of the field. After an introductory memorial lecture by Malcolm Whitehead on the founder of the International Menopause Society, Dr Pieter A. van Keep, all various aspects of menopause, divided in 12 sections, are presented by a selection of internationally respected speakers.

The first section describes experiences with menopause, its symptoms and influences on work and social life, and with hormonal treatment in different cultures all over the world (Thailand, Pakistan, Argentina, Hong Kong, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Norway and the United States).

In the second section some aspects of the menopausal endocrinology and physiology are discussed, such as the role of FSH measurements, the changes in the vascular system of the aging ovary, the hot flush and the breast.

The following sections report, respectively, on the psychosocial aspects of menopause, such as well-being and mood, and the way that estrogen therapy may effect it, and also on urinary incontinence, the endometrium, and the role of vaginal ultrasonography.

Of course, of great interest are the chapters on the cardiovascular and musculoskeletal changes after menopause, and the important preventive influences of hormone therapy. Very important are the observations in the arterial wall of rabbits made by Haarbo. The role of the carbohydrate metabolism with respect to the cardiovascular system is reviewed by Godsland et al.

In Section 7, the effects of hormones on bone mass, the joints, connective tissue, and skin are described, as well as new observations in rheumatoid arthritis patients by Hall and Spector. Furthermore, some new data concerning the interactions of sex steroids and the brain are presented. The effects of sex steroids on the breast are still a matter of debate. The role of estrogens and progestins, given as oral contraceptive and as postmenopausal hormone therapy, in relation to the breast are discussed.

A separate section reports on clinical aspects, such as the issue of compliance, which may be improved by continuous combined hormone replacement therapy (Chapter 49 by Mattsson), or long-cyclic hormone therapy (Chapter 50 by David et al.). Sarrel and Sarrel hand the gynaecologists some tools for counselling the climacteric women.

Not every climacteric woman desires hormonal treatment. For these women, or in case of contra-indications for hormone therapy, alternatives are available. Some are discussed in Section 10 of the book. Furthermore, the book discusses sexuality around menopause, and the influence of hormones on sexuality in the postmenopause, and it even has a section on the aging male.

To conclude, this book succeeds in giving a clear review on many important aspects of menopause and treatment of perimenopausal problems, and is certainly worthwhile reading by any physician active in the field.

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