



BOOKS

The Ulcer Story: The Authoritative Guide to Ulcers, Dyspepsia and Heartburn

W. Grant Thompson. 415 pp. Illust. Plenum Press, New York. 1996. Distributed in Canada by the Canadian Medical Association, Ottawa. \$40.95 (\$32.95 CMA members). ISBN 0-306-45275-8

Overall rating: Excellent
Strengths: Clearly written and up to date
Weaknesses: None
Audience: Physicians and members of the general public with an interest in peptic ulcers

Dr. W. Grant Thompson has established himself as an authoritative writer with an unusual ability to communicate effectively and in an entertaining way to physicians and the public alike. In this book he has done it again. As professor of medicine at the University of Ottawa and chief of gastroenterology at the Ottawa Civic Hospital, Thompson is well qualified to write such a book. He has had a lifelong interest in dyspepsia, functional gastrointestinal disease and the evaluation of abdominal symptoms.

This book is a chronology of the fascinating 20th-century story of the acid-related disorders. Seldom in medical history have there been such sweeping changes in the therapeutic approach to and the pathophysiologic concepts concerning ulcers. For the reader to understand the broad dimensions of this subject, the author has structured the book in 7 parts: part 1 concerns anatomy, physiology, terminology, history and epidemiology; part 2 the causes of ulcers; part 3 dyspepsia, gastric and duodenal ulcers, and complications; part 4 heart-

burn and gastroesophageal reflux; part 5 functional dyspepsia, noncardiac chest pain, functional gastrointestinal disease and cancer of the upper gastrointestinal tract; and part 6 specific treatments for ulcers, esophagitis and dyspepsia. The final section provides an interesting approach to the issues involved in evaluating treatments for ulcers in clinical trials and the challenge of assessing upper gastrointestinal symptoms.

The origin of symptoms and their implications, and the relevance of psychosocial factors, are of increasing interest to patients and physicians, and they receive due attention in this book. Thompson has dealt with these subjects better than any other author.

The chapters are succinct and well laid out, with helpful subheadings and a concise summary. The text is also supported by diagrams, black-and-white photographs (mainly radiographs) and tables. The text is liberally sprinkled with appropriate historical quotations. There is a useful bibliography at the end of the book; it provides excellent guidance for further reading.

The book is remarkably up to date. It succeeds in dispelling many long-standing myths about ulcers and in leading readers lucidly through the marked changes in our understanding of the pathophysiologic aspects, investigation and management of the acid-related disorders.

This book should be read by all physicians with an interest in ulcers and esophagitis, and especially by those who treat these diseases. Others with a more general interest in medicine will also enjoy this book and find it entertaining and easy to read.

Richard H. Hunt, MB, ChB
Faculty of Medicine
McMaster University
Hamilton, Ont.

CD-ROM

The Cochrane Library 1996 (CD-ROM)

Issue 3. BMJ Publishing Group, London. 1996. Distributed in Canada by the Canadian Medical Association, Ottawa. \$270.95 (\$214.95 CMA members). For network prices, call Membership Services.

Overall rating: Excellent
Strengths: Comprehensive source of information about evidence to inform health care decision-making; updated regularly
Weaknesses: Free-text searches identify too many references; evidence often insufficient because conclusive trials are unavailable
Audience: Those who believe in the scientific basis for health care services
System requirements: IBM-compatible computer with 386 MHz processor or higher or Macintosh, 4 MB RAM, hard disk with at least 15 MB free space, CD-ROM drive

The tremendous amount of information emerging about new treatments and other health care interventions makes it extremely difficult to stay current. The *Cochrane Library* CD-ROM is an ambitious attempt to overcome this problem. It is a powerful tool that sifts through the published literature and identifies the best available information. It provides quick access to systematic reviews about the effectiveness of health care interventions and identifies references to studies that meet stringent review criteria. The library is assembled by the Cochrane Collaboration, an international group of expert researchers and reviewers.

The CD-ROM comprises 4 main databases. The *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* contains 358 systematic reviews of research on the effects of health care. The *Database of Abstracts*