

The Evaluation and Treatment of the Patient With Diarrhea

by Paul Miskovitz and Arnold Rochwarger, 170 pp, \$39.95, ISBN 1-56372-0590, Boston, Mass, Andover Medical Publishers, 1993.

The express purpose of this book is to provide the practicing physician with a clinically relevant, up-to-date overview of the causes, pathophysiology, symptoms, optimal diagnostic evaluation, and treatment of diarrheal illnesses in adults.

There are chapters that deal with infectious diarrhea, including bacterial, parasitic, and viral diseases. These chapters are of increased importance due to the increased prevalence of the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome. Other chapters address malabsorption, general illnesses associated with diarrhea, inflammatory bowel disease, microscopic and collagenous colitis, and factitious diarrhea.

The family physician seeking a quick clinical guide to the differential diagnosis of the adult patient with diarrhea would be better served to seek assistance from more concise chapters in primary care-oriented texts such as Conn's *Current Diagnosis*. There are a number of clinical pearls that can help the clinician diagnose more precisely the causes of diarrhea through the use of etiologically specific cultures and other diagnostic tests.

The authors thoroughly cover all causes of diarrhea in the adult, and this is the shortfall of the book for the family physician. The work is far too lengthy to serve as a quick clinical reference for the primary care physician. The text provides up-

dated treatment recommendations for common and rarer causes of diarrhea. For the physician with an intense interest in the diagnosis and management of diarrheal disease, this text is ideal.

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Dr. Welford's Chart Notes Program

Version 2.3, by Charles R. Welford, \$500 single user, \$1000 network, free demonstration diskette, Rockford, Ill, Welford Medical Computing Inc, 1992.

This computer program runs on IBM or IBM-compatible XT, AT, 386, 486 computers with 640 K (kilobytes) of random access memory (of which 512 K is free), DOS (disk operating system) 2.0 or above, and a hard disk with 5 MB (megabytes) free.

This program claims to provide everything a physician would need to keep complete patient records, including the first visit to the latest, a list of medications and allergies, and a log of laboratory tests that can be tabulated and graphed. It has an automatic alert system that notifies the user of drug interactions or allergies. It keeps a database of a physician's practice and is able to determine all the patients a physician might be treating for any disease or disease systems, including coding for *International Classification of Diseases* and *Current Procedural Terminology*.

Dr. Welford's Chart Notes Program includes a full-featured word

processor for progress notes, consultations, or correspondence. It has a 12 000-word medical vocabulary that is expandable to 65 000 words, with a feature to search the user's notes by meaning. It also has a 130 000-word spell checker, a "window" feature that has boxes below the text for allergies, medications, and diagnoses for each patient entry that can be altered as the note is entered, and a template system that can be used to insert blocks of text from a customized list. A phrase or abbreviation like H&P for history and physical can be chosen to insert a block of prepared text from storage, such as a normal symptom system review or examination.

The program also has a calculator to perform equations, for example, body surface area, directly from laboratory or clinical data in the notes, a prescription writer, patient education brochures describing diseases and medications (which can be edited and amended), and a security system that includes a changeable password with variable levels of access, a tamper log, and a write-protect function to make files unalterable.

It took a while for me to navigate through the intricacies of the program since the features are so varied and ornate. As someone who likes to try a program without reading the manual first to see how user-friendly it is, I was confused by some of the functions, despite the on-screen menu. I needed to read more about them. Since the manual is clearly written, however, it was easy to discover how to do it right. As a word processor, the program works as well as any, but the typing is slowed at the outset by its setting up the baseline of allergies, medications, and diseases. It is annoying to be warned of an interaction when you are aware