
This book provides a good reference for individuals seeking information on various topics of interest to healthcare delivery organizations and comprehensible definitions for the nomenclature related to their functions and management. In its fourth edition, new terms have been added and the authors provide good insight into the history and future of the U.S. Healthcare System. The book would be useful for the student who seeks future employment in a healthcare delivery organization, but is too cursory to be used as a text for a class.

The authors deliver what is promised in the title by giving a very broad overview of healthcare delivery organizations, but the focus on breadth of topics leaves the reader without much depth in any one particular area. The book could be described as an encyclopedia of healthcare delivery vocabulary with very lay descriptions of terminology. To their credit, the authors provide a list of suggested readings for individuals who seek more in-depth coverage of topics but these readings tend to be general in nature as well.

There is no shortage of topics included by the authors. A wide array of healthcare services, ranging from professional, diagnostic and therapeutic to administrative services, are described. In addition, an entire chapter is devoted to the role and application of automation. Poignant and practical discussion of management principles and practices are included. The highlight of the book is that it places modern healthcare delivery in an historical context by demonstrating how we arrived to where we are today. Those who read the book with a keen interest in the topic, however, will be left yearning for additional reading.

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There should be no doubt that this is a textbook designed for undergraduate and graduate pharmacy students. It is not light reading. It is not entertaining either. But it is serious and addresses many of the most profound ethical dilemmas faced by the pharmacy profession. As serious as this sounds, the text is also approachable. The chapters are rather short and comprehensible. It is written on a level that should capture the interests of most students (and instructors). For these and other reasons, this text is an important addition to the somewhat sparse literature of pharmacy ethics. While there are other good text books in the field, none combine the didactic material of the subject matter with practical examples of ethical case studies as well as Veatch and Haddad have done. With the advent of the case studies approach to pharmacy education throughout the curriculum, the book is timely. It is also well written. The cases, for the most part, are very realistic and challenge readers to think through some difficult choices. There are a few contrived cases that just seem too bizarre to be believable. This minor critique aside, the authors have chosen to explore a variety of situations that pharmacists in very diverse types of practices could easily encounter. All are thought provoking.

There is also a very good mix of background, philosophy and discussion of alternatives provided with the cases. The authors have found a format that should be useful to any ethics instructor who wants to take the time to teach through the use of case studies. Each chapter begins with a discussion of the subject under consideration. For the most part, this introductory background is concise, just long enough to give the reader an overview of the topic without the heavy, and often difficult, rhetoric of philosophical ethics. Then a case is described. Most of these factual situations are complete enough to provide a good idea of just what is at stake in the choices of a practicing pharmacist. At least a few of the cases left me begging for additional facts to complete the picture. This is not necessarily bad because it does force the reader to consider what additional facts may be necessary to make a fully informed and rational decision about how to behave when faced with difficult ethical dilemmas. It also may
force the reader to check the validity of presumptions about the facts at hand. At any rate, where there are cases that do not have enough facts to thoroughly understand the actors, their motivations and choices, discussion with others using the book for study should be stimulating. After the case, the authors provide a commentary that discusses the issues raised, what resources or guides may be available to pharmacists to help think through the situation and then some possible alternative solutions. With only a few exceptions the authors have avoided indoctrinations. One of the great failings of most ethics textbooks aimed at students is the tendency of the authors to “preach” their own notion of right and wrong. Veatch and Haddad have managed to avoid this shortfall in most cases. Where the authors have included a bit of leading readers to a particular conclusion, they do so with subtlety and often do provide alternative arguments, even if they are not very persuasive. Instructors should have very little difficulty finding multiple ways of looking at problems and potential solutions.

There are only two somewhat serious issues that I observe with the book. The first is that the introductory materials are short. I would like a bit more background material on how ethics fits in with the scheme life in general and why professional ethics is an important academic discipline that should be studied. In the same vein, some details on how ethics have evolved in pharmacy practice would be useful. The authors need not go into great detail because there are other books that track the history of pharmacy ethics. Ethical Responsibility in Pharmacy Practice by Robert A. Buerki and Louis D. Vottero (American Institute of the History of Pharmacy, Madison, Wisconsin, 1994) is heavy in ethics history. This is a very reasonably priced textbook and has served as the basic text in my own ethics course. Veatch and Haddad could have easily included some of those historical materials just to give the student a flavor of where the moral character of pharmacy has come from.

My other critique is of the publisher. The book looks boring (even though it is not). There are no graphics. Not even a line or two. In this regard, the book looks like something from around the turn of the century and I do not mean the one just under completion. Even more disturbing, however, the print is much to small and light. (Its not just my eyes; several associates and students agreed). It makes an otherwise good book very hard to read. Compared to Ethical Issues in Pharmacy edited by Bruce Weinstein (Applied Therapeutics, Inc., Vancouver, Washington, 1996), a text I have used for the past three years, the Veatch and Haddad book requires a great deal of effort just to read. This is most unfortunate because this newer addition to the literature has so much to offer. I am concerned that students may not focus as well on the content just because of its appearance. As much as I like the book, this problem will require some serious contemplation before adopting it for my classroom use.

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Varro E. Tyler became dismayed by the proliferation of “inaccurate and deceptive information” about herbs and wrote the first edition of The Honest Herbal in 1982 for the general public. Dr. Tyler stood out among other publications about herbs not only because of his expertise as a respected pharmacognosist who bothered to reference his information, but also because of his obvious enthusiasm about the appropriate use of herbs. Each subsequent edition has continued the tradition he began and we are not disappointed with the fourth edition despite a change in authorship to include a new primary author. Steven Foster’s credentials are as an “author, photographer, and consultant in the field of medicinal and aromatic plants.” His education is implied to be self-education because no degrees or academic affiliations are provided.

The book begins with two introductory sections. The first section called Pros and Cons outlines the authors’ opinion on the current interest in and misinformation about botanicals. The authors take to task such common notions as natural sources cannot cause harm, whole plants have physiological properties different from the active constituents isolated from the same plant parts, and organically grown botanicals are preferable to those grown using inorganic or synthetic fertilizers. The authors then put forth the opinion that the popularity of herbs stems partly from these agents actually functioning as placebos. This brings the authors to Dr. Tyler’s favorite alternative medicine to discredit, homeopathy. He concludes the chapter with the promise to the reader that the information provided is based on the latest scientific information to help them decide whether they want to take a particular herb or not. I can hardly blame Dr. Tyler for his often stridently stated messages because of his almost single-handed bid to be the one source of scientifically based information. I certainly agree with most of his statements, but not all. I find his supposition that the whole plant and the active constituents “usually display activities that are quantitatively similar, if not quantitatively identical” a little misleading and would emphasize his use of the word “usually.” Take Panax ginseng, for example. One of the ginsenosides, Rg1 raises blood pressure and is a central stimulant, while another, Rb1, lowers blood pressure and is a central depressant [see Bisset, N.G., Herbal Drugs and Phytopharmaceuticals: A Handbook for Practice on a Scientific Basis, Medpharm Scientific Publishers, CRC Press, Boca Raton, GA, (1994)]. The resultant effect on blood pressure and the central nervous system will rely on the balance between these two ginsenosides and neither taken alone would reflect the pharmacology of the whole plant.

The second section on Laws and Regulations is a credible relating of the issues that led to the various federal acts that now regulate the pharmaceutical industry and the Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act of 1994. Each monograph begins with a brief physical description of the plant providing the Latin binomial and the plant part used. A monograph often also begins with an interesting anecdote about the historical use or discovery of the medicinal properties of the plant. The authors then provide a listing of its uses as well as a “non-technical” discussion of the chemistry and pharmacology of the plant. Next is provided an evaluation of the information concerning the efficacy and safety of the plant. The authors conclude each monograph with their opinion on the overall utility of the botanical. Each monograph is referenced with between two to 32 references with an average of five to nine references. Keeping in mind that this is a book for the general public, it is still a little disappointing to see that some of the references have not been updated. For example, the monographs on fenugreek, ginger and licorice do not site the most recent updates in the general public, it is still a little disappointing to see that some of the references have not been updated. For example, the monographs on fenugreek, ginger and licorice do not site the most recent updates in Review of Natural Products. However, the monographs on botanicals that I am most familiar with do appear to have been updated with the latest published information. Dr. Tyler, for example, has slightly altered his view on the usefulness of ginseng based on more recent published data.

The book concludes with a section called Summary Chart, which is also arranged alphabetically by common name with tabular headings providing the source (Latin binomial), the part of the plant used, and the principle uses. The chart ends with columns assessing the botanical’s “apparent efficacy” and “probable safety” using a plus/minus scale.

One of the most common criticisms I hear about The Honest Herbal is that it has never included drawings or photographs of the plants reviewed. Perhaps with Mr. Foster’s involvement that will change with the 5th edition.

When I changed my clinical practice from drug information to integrative medicine with the College of Medicine at The University of Arizona, The Honest Herbal, 3rd Edition, was one of the first references I began consulting in earnest. Recognizing that this reference is geared to the general public, the 4th edition remains useful to the pharmacy student and health care practitioner for its clear, concise, albeit opinionated, review of the literature. The latter critique is the reason I have not considered using the book as a classroom text.

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The proper employment of protective groups is crucial to the synthesis of almost any medicinally important natural product, and many "non-natural" drug candidates as well. The previous two editions of this book are concise guides to protective groups, including information on their introduction, selective removal, and stability. As such, they are exceptionally valuable resources for the practicing synthetic medicinal chemist. A key and invaluable portion of the book are the novel reactivity charts (presented in Chapter 10 of the 3rd edition). These charts indicate at a glance, in a general manner, the stability of numerous protective groups under a variety of synthetic conditions.

The 3rd edition of this now-classic reference extends and enhances its utility, both quantitatively and qualitatively. In quantitative terms, the 3rd edition is 306 pages longer than the second edition, with 2349 new citations and the inclusion of 348 new protective groups. This quantitative augmentation of the book is impressive and significant, and alone would provide justification for the publication of this new edition. Equally significant, however, is the qualitative enhancement of the 3rd edition with the addition of entirely new and novel information. Specifically, two new chapters have been added to the previous ones on protective groups for phenols and hydroxyl, carbonyl, carboxyl, thiol and amino groups. Chapters 8 and 9 describe protective groups for the alkyne -CH moiety and for the phosphate groups. The latter chapter is certain to be of particular interest to medicinal chemists, with the vital, central, and increasing importance of phosphorus chemistry in biological settings.

The second edition of this book has been one of the most useful books on my personal reference shelf. I am sure that the 3rd edition will prove to be even more useful. It should be in the library at every institution where synthetic chemistry is done, and I strongly recommend it for the bookshelf of every synthetic medicinal chemist.

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