BOOK REVIEW


The number of new publications that are available every year makes the task of selecting books that could be useful resources for blood bank and clinical staff more than overwhelming. One longs for a comprehensive and thorough discussion of the topic of interest that is succinct enough to provide the answers quickly.

The second edition of Transfusion Reactions, edited by Mark Popovsky, was designed to meet this need, and the knowledge and expertise of the authors is impressive. Moreover, the lengthy list of current and historic references at the end of each chapter will allow the reader who needs more information to find it readily. This second edition contains new chapters on reactions associated with progenitor cells, plasma derivatives, and hypertensive reactions, as well as a 28-page chapter on Nursing Management of Transfusion Reactions. This should prove useful for those readers who work with the nursing services to improve the care provided to transfused patients. Each chapter has tables and figures that enhance the text and add to the overall clarity of the discussion.

This book deliberately omits material on the viral infectious complications of transfusions, and considering the length of the text this was an expedient decision. Indeed, as the editor, mindful of the typical patient's concern, notes, "this text is about the 'other' complications of transfusion." This is an important point, as "...a patient is 100 times more likely to receive the 'wrong unit' of blood than to be exposed to HIV or hepatitis."

Each chapter is organized in one of three ways: by type of transfusion reaction, including clinical presentation, differential diagnosis, mechanism, treatment, and prevention; by association with a particular type of transfusion product, i.e., progenitor cells; or by patient type, i.e., therapeutic apheresis. If the reader is unsure of what they are looking for, they may struggle to find their topic by chapter. The nursing chapter does contain a useful flow chart of initial signs and symptoms of transfusion reactions.

Of special interest to readers of Immunohematology will be the differential diagnosis between hemolytic reactions and other reactions. Blood bankers are well aware that the presence of an antibody in a patient suspected to have had a transfusion reaction can be a source of confusion as a false positive.

The chapter on autologous transfusion complications provides a balanced summary of the latest studies on the advantages and disadvantages of this common practice. Patients and their families often are unaware that there are problems associated with autologous donation and need this information.

In my own experience, working with transfusion committees and nursing continuing education, I found the chapter on Transfusion Related Acute Lung Injury (TRALI) particularly helpful in preparing training material for helping to raise awareness of this clinical problem.

As in any text of such complex material, there are a few confusing typographic errors and inconsistencies. However, considering the breadth of information and depth of detail, most readers looking for a useful text on transfusion reactions, even those who already have the first edition, should find this book a practical and helpful guide to transfusion reactions.

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