Those readers of CHEST interested in serving as reviewers for “The Bookshelf” are asked to notify the department editor, Lee K. Brown, MD, FCCP, at the following address: New Mexico Center for Sleep Medicine, Lovelace Health Systems, 4700 Jefferson Blvd. NE, Suite 900, Albuquerque, NM 87109. Please indicate your field(s) of expertise (pulmonary, cardiology, cardiothoracic surgery, critical care, or sleep), and include your curriculum vitae if available. In appreciation for completed reviews, authors may retain the book or software for their own use.

Chronic Obstructive Lung Diseases
By Norbert F. Voelkel, MD, and William MacNee, MBChB, MD, FRCPC, FRCP, eds. Hamilton, ON: BC Decker, 2002; 428 pp; $99.95

Chronic Obstructive Lung Diseases is a hardbound textbook divided into 29 chapters, with over 50 contributing international authors. The editors have compiled an authoritative, comprehensive reference that reviews virtually every aspect of obstructive lung disease. Beginning with Dr. Voelkel’s first chapter on the historical perspective of chronic lung disease, this well referenced and timely text is filled with information, and it presents challenges for research and future study in COPD.

Not for the faint-at-heart, the first one third of the text provides a thorough analysis of normal lung structure and function. All chapters are replete with cutting-edge molecular and biochemical aspects of lung growth, repair, and injury. Prenatal lung development, airway epithelium, mucus, mucus-secreting cells, surfactant, and small and large airway diseases are discussed extensively, with a focus on normal and abnormal physiology. There is an emphasis on emphysema as a major entity, and selected genetic abnormalities are also given individual attention. Most chapters include black and white photomicrographs, diagrams, and tables that are effective for illustrative purposes. An excellent bibliography, containing a wealth of references, concludes each chapter. The comprehensive nature of the material in these introductory chapters may be daunting for the busy, practicing pulmonologist.

The second two thirds of the text are more clinically oriented; the focus on aspects of infection (bacterial and viral), pulmonary function tests, imaging, and the clinical management of routine and severe obstructive lung disease and its complications, such as pulmonary hypertension, cor pulmonale, and lung cancer. Highlights include an excellent chapter devoted to obstructive lung diseases, other than emphysema and chronic bronchitis, grouped by anatomic site, e.g., upper airway, trachea, large and small airways. Newer aspects of lung volume reduction surgery, including the National Emphysema Treatment Trial, lung transplantation, and a review of the benefits of pulmonary rehabilitation, are included. The book ends with a discussion of lung cancer screening and lung protective strategies.

A strength of the text is the emphasis on radiologic-pathological correlation, which may not be available in less definitive works. Particularly noteworthy is the addition of a CD-ROM version of the text, included at no additional charge. The disk is easy to use (even for the computer novice) and provides a PDF-format version of the entire text, including color photos and micrographs.

Given the increasing population of patients with chronic obstructive lung disease, a brief chapter reviewing preoperative pulmonary evaluation might be a helpful addition for future editions. Furthermore, the use of color for photomicrographs and bronchoscopy photographs within the hardbound text rather than just in the CD-ROM could enhance recognition and learning.

Overall, Chronic Obstructive Lung Diseases is a hardbound textbook material that captures the subject well and is presented by noted experts in the field. We recommend this text as a current review that can serve as a valuable, definitive reference for academic as well as practicing pulmonologists.

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Respiratory Medicine Specialist Handbook
By J. Paul Dilworth and David R. Baldwin, eds. Amsterdam, the Netherlands: Harcourt Academic Publishers, 2001; 701 pp; $39.90

Respiratory Medicine Specialist Handbook provides basic but necessary information regarding respiratory medicine to trainees in this rapidly evolving field. The two distinguished editors have persuaded renowned British pulmonologists and thoracic surgeons to present current information in a compact form.

This succinct book, comprising 31 chapters, is skillfully structured and commences with a section on crucial pulmonary diagnostic techniques. The chapter on pulmonary function tests is remarkable for condensing so much information in so few pages. The segment on thoracic imaging displays the normal roentgenologic anatomy and carries representative plates on different disease patterns. However, a few more roentgenograms at appropriate places would have vastly embellished the text. Innovative chapters such as pulmonary disease in pregnancy; the respiratory risks involved in flying, diving, and climbing; and palliative care make the material relevant to current practice. A separate exposition on chronic cough recognizes the importance of one of the more common symptoms experienced by our patients. The descriptions of sleep apnea syndromes and lung infections deserve to be singled out for the comprehensive approach adopted. Readers will also find material covering current concepts in lung transplantation and thoracic surgery.

For future editions, the editors might consider subdividing the material on diffuse parenchymal lung disease in order to improve the reader’s ability to comprehend the nuances of this topic. All of the other standard subjects, such as asthma, COPD, lung cancer, pleural diseases, and tuberculosis, are dealt with adequately. Finally, the editors should be complemented for enhancing the value of this book by including imaginative chapters on teaching and research, two essential components for the evolution of any field.

The strength of Respiratory Medicine Specialist Handbook lies in the wealth of up-to-date information, written in a lucid manner, and backed by many reader-friendly diagrams, tables, and flowcharts, and including some key references. All in all, this portable guide would be a handy companion, as a ready reference in the wards, for residents in respiratory medicine.

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