# WILLIAMS TEXTBOOK OF ENDOCRINOLOGY

8th Edition

# WILLIAMS TEXTBOOK **ENDOCRINOLOGY**

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# **PREFACE**

The aim of Williams Textbook of Endocrinology continues to be to serve as a bridge between basic science and clinical endocrinology. This aim was clearly formulated in the preface to the first edition:

The rapidity and extent of advances in endocrinology have made it increasingly difficult for the student and physician to take full advantage of information available for the understanding, diagnosis and treatment of clinical disorders. It is the realization of these difficulties that prompted the writing of this book. The main objective is to provide a condensed and authoritative discussion of the management of clinical endocrinopathies, based upon the application of fundamental information obtained from chemical and physiologic investigations.

Since the publication of the seventh edition, endocrinology has continued to change. The impact of molecular and cell biology has been to radically transform our understanding of endocrine physiology and endocrine pathology. Today in the approach to disease—no less than in basic endocrine science—the focus is more on how hormones act than on factors that influence hormone levels. Moreover, the recognition that many chemical mediators behave like hormones, even though they act by autocrine or paracrine mechanisms rather than via the circulation, has vastly broadened the scope of endocrinology. The technological change in clinical medicine, especially the imaging revolution, has given new power to diagnosis that was unknown at the time of the last edition and has expanded the therapeutic repertoire.

The eighth edition of Williams Textbook of Endocrinology has been carefully planned to reflect the rapidly advancing elements of modern endocrinology. Molecular biology and cell biology are in evidence in essentially every chapter. The introductory chapters on hormone action, which are rich with diagrams, make the basic principles readily understandable both to beginning students and to clinicians who trained before the new science appeared. We have also added new chapters on fetal endocrinology and on puberty and its disorders.

In organizing this edition, we faced the special problem of the dual system of laboratory unit nomenclature within the United States. Since 1988, virtually all medical journals have used the International System of Units (SI units) for clinical laboratory values, whereas most hospital laboratories in the United States have used conventional units. Thus one system is used in the medical literature and another in the hospital. We decided to use both systems in the text: SI units are given first and the conventional units follow in parentheses for all measurements except blood pressure, which is given only in millimeters of mercury; energy value of food, which is given in kilocalories; and quantities for which the numbers are the same in both systems (e.g., nanomoles per liter or milliequivalents per liter for sodium concentration and international units per liter or milli-international units per milliliter for luteinizing hormone). In most instances the conversion between SI and conventional units is straightforward. In other cases the optimal way to convert from one system to the other is not clear-cut because there are different ways to express values in both systems. It is imperative that each reader consult his or her own laboratory for normal values. Readers must be alert to units, not only in our text, but also in clinical practice.

A striking feature of this textbook has always been the fact that the contributors are at the forefronts of their disciplines, thereby ensuring the freshness of each edition. This feature remains true for the current edition. Those who wrote in previous editions have devoted an immense effort to updating material, and the new contributors have expended an equal or greater effort in formulating new chapters. Neither task is easy, and to our authors we say thank you.

The book could not have been edited without the dedicated help of the co-workers in our offices—Christy K. Gonzales, Brenda H. Hennis, and Rita A. Koger. We acknowledge the special contributions made by Judith Gandy, our manuscript editor at the W. B. Saunders Company. Her remarkable attention to detail and her pursuit of excellence have had a major impact on the editors and on the book.

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