

ENDOCRINOLOGY

VOLUME 3

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GRUNE & STRATTON

A Subsidiary of Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers

New York San Francisco London

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
Main entry under title:

Endocrinology.

Bibliography
Includes index.

1. Endocrine glands—Diseases. 2. Endocrinology.
I. DeGroot, Leslie J. [DNLM: 1. Endocrine diseases.
2. Endocrine glands. 3. Hormones. WK100.3 E56]
RC648.E458 . 616.4 78-24043
ISBN 0-8089-1169-4 (v. 3)

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Grune & Stratton, Inc.
111 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10003

Distributed in the United Kingdom by
Academic Press, Inc. (London) Ltd.
24/28 Oval Road, London NW 1

Library of Congress Catalog Number 78-24043
International Standard Book Number 0-8089-1169-4

Printed in the United States of America

Preface

This new text is intended to provide a complete contemporary source of basic and clinical aspects of endocrinology. Our book is directed to serious students of endocrinology: the authors believe that this encompasses undergraduates, house officers, fellows, and physicians practicing in the field. We hope to provide a source to which these serious students can turn in order to find an answer to all of their questions.

It is obvious that there is no dearth of endocrine texts, but, in surveying the field, we have not found a volume which presents "molecular" or "metabolic" endocrinology with the emphasis that we feel is appropriate, or which has adequately attempted a synthesis into a coherent whole data available from basic science and the clinic.

In the past years, endocrinology and metabolism have gone through stages of development that may be arbitrarily characterized as descriptive, anatomic, physiologic, and biochemical. Current endocrinology is featured by (1) a great increase in knowledge of the biochemical basis of endocrine function and dysfunction, (2) development of sensitive techniques for the measurement of hormones, their precursors and metabolites, and (3) a flood of information on integrated endocrine responses in various physiologic states. It is now possible to characterize many endocrinologic events in molecular terms and to integrate isolated observations into meaningful and unifying concepts. This additional information has called for a new approach to the teaching of endocrinology.

Our book is written with a physiologic and biochemical interpretive bias, indicating the change in endocrinology from a largely descriptive discipline to one integrating basic science. Because the book is meant to be used by practicing physicians, however, we have made it just as comprehensive in its clinical presentation, which we consider crucial. We have stressed the relation of clinical endocrinology to physiology, genetics, biochemistry, and immunology. We have used basic science data to add to clinical data to aid in interpretation, and have indicated areas in which problems exist or where ignorance remains.

While the editors philosophically would have preferred to develop a book totally integrated around "processes" or "functions" controlled by coincident endocrine stimuli, the proper peda-

gogic approach demands a more traditional introduction to the field. Thus our work is divided into two complementary sections. In the first, a typically organ-oriented section of about 1400 pages, basic endocrine physiology and clinical problems are thoroughly covered. Clinical problems that confront the practicing physician are emphasized. The second section, of about 700 pages, integrates, in a series of chapters, contemporary endocrinologic knowledge in relation to important processes or problems. Here, for example, we consider growth, puberty, the response to starvation, obesity, and so forth. In these areas there are normal and abnormal homeostatic processes that involve multifactoral endocrine control, and concepts that can now be seen to unify endocrine physiology.

Volumes of this size suffer from the delay between writing and publication. In an effort to counteract this problem, we have given authors the opportunity to add important new material during proofing of the final galley. New references have simply been inserted in the appropriate sequence by letter designation, e.g. 10a, 10b, etc. We believe this small departure from custom offers an important improvement in our text.

The proliferation of abbreviations in medical writings is in one way a benefit, and in another a curse. Abbreviations surely accelerate the transmission of information, but only if one understands the key. We have attempted to standardize all abbreviations to conform with those used by *Endocrinology*, a style familiar to most of our readers. Variations from these standards are, we hope, adequately explained.

This book is, in every sense, the joint effort of eight editors and nearly two hundred authors. To these distinguished scientists, teachers, and clinicians, the chief editor expresses his sincere thanks and great respect. It is the broad knowledge and hard work of these collaborators which makes the volume unique in its contribution.

Sincere appreciation is also offered to our co-workers at Grune and Stratton, to the secretaries across the nation who came to recognize my voice quite easily, to Ms. Myrna Zimberg for a vast amount of help, and to Helen DeGroot for patiently page-proofing a mountain of text.

Leslie J. DeGroot, M.D.

Contributors

Paul Aiginger, M.D.
II Medical University Klinik
Abt. f. Nuclearmedizin
University of Vienna
Vienna, Austria

Thomas T. Aoki, M.D.
Assistant Professor of Medicine
Harvard Medical School
and Associate, Peter Bent Brigham
Hospital
and Investigator, Howard Hughes Medical
Institute
Boston, Massachusetts

Cesare Aragona
Senior Research Fellow
Department of Physiology
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba

Ronald A. Arky, M.D.
Professor of Medicine
Harvard Medical School
and Chief of Medicine
Mount Auburn Hospital
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Claude D. Arnaud, M.D.
Professor of Medicine and Physiology
University of California School of
Medicine
and Chief, Endocrine Unit
San Francisco Veterans Administration
Hospital
San Francisco, California

Jurgen Aschoff, Dr. Med.
Director at the Institute
Max-Planck-Institut für
Verhaltensphysiologie
Erling-Andechs, Germany

Louis V. Avioli, M.D.
Schoenberg Professor of Medicine
Washington University School of Medicine
and the Jewish Hospital of St. Louis
St. Louis, Missouri

Lester Baker, M.D.
Director, Clinical Research Center
Children's Hospital of Philadelphia
and Professor of Pediatrics
University of Pennsylvania School of
Medicine
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Susanne Barton, Ph.D.
Associate Professor, Department of
Physiology
University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta

Tomas Berl, M.D.
Assistant Professor of Medicine
University of Colorado Medical Center
Denver, Colorado

M. Bonnyns, M.D.
Charge de Clinique
University of Brussels
and Adjoint in the Department of Medicine
Saint-Pierre Hospital
Brussels, Belgium

Philippe J. Bordier, M.D. (deceased)
Metre de Recherche
I.N.S.E.R.M.
Paris, France

Cyril Y. Bowers, M.D.
Professor of Medicine
Tulane University Medical School
New Orleans, Louisiana

F. R. Bringhurst, M.D.
Clinical and Research Fellow in Medicine
Massachusetts General Hospital
and Research Fellow in Medicine
Harvard Medical School
Boston, Massachusetts

John E. Buster, M.D.
Assistant Professor of Obstetrics and
Gynecology
University of California at Los Angeles
School of Medicine
Los Angeles, California

George F. Cahill, Jr., M.D.
Professor of Medicine
Harvard Medical School
and Physician, Peter Bent Brigham
Hospital
and Director of Research, Howard Hughes
Medical Institute
Boston, Massachusetts

Vito M. Campese, M.D.
Assistant Professor of Medicine
University of Southern California School of
Medicine
Division of Nephrology
Los Angeles County-University of South-
ern California Medical Center
Los Angeles, California

Fabio Celotti, M.D.
Department of Endocrinology
University of Milano
Milano, Italy

Ding Chang, Ph.D.
Institute for Biomedical Research
The University of Texas at Austin
Austin, Texas

Alan Cherrington, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Physiology
Vanderbilt University Medical School
Nashville, Tennessee

Jean-Louis Chiasson, M.D.
Assistant Professor of Medicine
Vanderbilt University Medical School
Nashville, Tennessee

Nicholas P. Christy, M. D.
Professor of Medicine
Columbia University College of Physicians
and Surgeons
and Director, Medical Service
The Roosevelt Hospital
New York, New York

Felix A. Conte, M.D.
Associate Professor of Pediatrics
University of California
San Francisco, California

Cary W. Cooper, Ph.D.
Professor of Pharmacology
Department of Pharmacology
University of North Carolina School of
Medicine
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

**D. Harold Copp, M.D., Ph.D.,
F.R.C.P.(c), F.R.S.C., F.R.S.**
Professor of Physiology
University of British Columbia
Vancouver, British Columbia

Marilyn C. Crim, Ph.D.

Research Associate, Department of
Nutrition and Food Science
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Val Davajan, M.D.

Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology
University of Southern California School of
Medicine
Los Angeles, California

Leonard J. Deftos, M.D.

Professor of Medicine
University of California
San Diego School of Medicine
and Chief, Endocrinology
San Diego Veterans Administration
Hospital
La Jolla, California

Leslie J. DeGroot, M.D.

Professor of Medicine and Head,
Endocrine Section
University of Chicago School of Medicine
Chicago, Illinois

Hector F. DeLuca, Ph.D.

Professor of Biochemistry
College of Agricultural and Life Sciences
University of Wisconsin
Madison, Wisconsin

Vincent DeQuattro, M.D.

Professor of Medicine
University of Southern California School of
Medicine
Los Angeles, California

Eugene R. DeSombre, Ph.D.

Associate Professor, Ben May Laboratory
for Cancer Research
and Research Associate, Biomedical
Computation Facilities
The University of Chicago
Chicago, Illinois

Francis P. DiBella, Ph.D.

Upjohn Company
Kalamazoo, Michigan

Jacques E. Dumont, M.D.

Professor and Head of Institute of
Interdisciplinary Research
Institut de Recherche Interdisciplinaire en
Biologie Humaine et Nucléaire
Brussels University
Brussels, Belgium

Edward N. Ehrlich, M.D.

Professor of Medicine
University of Wisconsin
and Head, Endocrine Section
and Associate Chairman, Department of
Medicine
University of Wisconsin
Madison, Wisconsin

Harvey Eisenberg, M.D.

Associate Professor
University of California Medical Center
Department of Radiology
Orange, California

Ragnar Ekholm, M.D., Ph.D.

Professor of Anatomy
Department of Anatomy
University of Göteborg
Göteborg, Sweden

Andre M. Ermans, M.D.

Associate Professor of Experimental
Medicine
Head of the Department of Nuclear
Medicine
St. Peter Hospital
Free University of Brussels
Brussels, Belgium

Imogen M. A. Evans, M.D., F.R.C.P.

Research Fellow, Endocrine Unit
Royal Postgraduate Medical School
London, England

David C. Evered, B.Sc., M.D., F.R.C.P.

Physician, Royal Victoria Infirmary
Newcastle Upon Tyne, England

Calvin Ezrin, M.D., F.R.C.P.-C., F.A.C.P.

Professor of Medicine and Associate
Professor of Pathology
University of Toronto School of Medicine
Toronto, Ontario

Stefan S. Fajans, M.D.

Professor of Internal Medicine
Head, Division of Endocrinology and
Metabolism
and Director, Metabolism Research Unit
The University of Michigan Medical
School
Ann Arbor, Michigan

Freddy Febres, M.D.

Director, Laboratory of Endocrinology
Maternidad Concepcion Palacios
Caracas, Venezuela

Philip Felig, M.D.

C.N.H. Long Professor and Vice
Chairman, Department of Internal
Medicine
Yale University School of Medicine
New Haven, Connecticut

Gianfranco Fenzi, M.D.

Assistant Professor of Medicine
Cattedra di Patologia Speciale Medica II
University of Pisa
Pisa, Italy

James B. Field, M.D.

Rutherford Professor of Medicine
Head, Division of Endocrinology and
Metabolism
Baylor University
Houston, Texas

Delbert A. Fisher, M.D.

Professor of Pediatrics
University of California at Los Angeles
School of Medicine
Torrance, California

Jeffrey S. Flier, M.D.

Assistant Professor of Medicine
Harvard Medical School
and Chief, Diabetes and Metabolism Unit
Beth Israel Hospital
Boston, Massachusetts

Karl Folkers, Ph.D.

Institute for Biomedical Research
University of Texas at Austin
Austin, Texas

Daniel W. Foster, M.D.

Professor of Internal Medicine
University of Texas Southwestern Medical
School
Dallas, Texas

Paul Henry Frank, M.D.

Assistant Professor, Department of
Radiology
Pritzker School of Medicine
The University of Chicago
Chicago, Illinois

Andrew G. Frantz, M.D.

Professor of Medicine and Chief, Division
of Endocrinology
Columbia University College of Physicians
and Surgeons
and Attending Physician, Presbyterian
Hospital
New York, New York

Donald Fraser, M.D.

Departments of Pediatrics and Physiology
University of Toronto
The Research Institute
The Hospital for Sick Children
Toronto, Ontario

Norbert Freinkel, M.D.

Kettering Professor of Medicine
and Director, Center for Endocrinology,
Metabolism, and Nutrition
Northwestern University Medical School
and Attending Physician, Northwestern
Memorial Hospital
and Consultant, Veterans Administration
Lakeside Hospital
Chicago, Illinois

Henry G. Friesen, M.D.
Professor and Head, Department of
Physiology
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba

Lawrence A. Frohman, M.D., Ph.D.
Professor of Medicine
University of Chicago Pritzker School of
Medicine
and Director, Division of Endocrinology
and Metabolism
Michael Reese Medical Center
Chicago, Illinois

Steven R. Goldring, M.D.
Instructor in Medicine
Massachusetts General Hospital
and Assistant to the Chief of Medicine
Department of Medicine
New England Deaconess Hospital
Boston, Massachusetts

Donald P. Goldstein, M.D.
Assistant Clinical Professor, Department of
Obstetrics and Gynecology
Harvard Medical School
Boston, Massachusetts

Samuel Goldstein, M.D.
Associate Professor of Medicine and
Associate in Biochemistry
McMaster University Medical School
and Attending Physician, McMaster
University Medical Center
Hamilton, Ontario

David Goltzman, M.D.
Assistant Professor of Experimental
Medicine
McGill University
and Assistant Physician
Royal Victoria Hospital
Montreal, Quebec

Victor E. Gould, M.D.
Professor of Pathology
Rush Medical School
Chicago, Illinois

**David G. Grahame-Smith, M.B., B.S.,
F.R.C.P.**
Rhodes Professor of Clinical Pharmacology
and Honorary Director, M.R.C. Unit of
Clinical Pharmacology
University of Oxford
Oxford, England

Douglas A. Greene, M.D.
Assistant Professor of Medicine
University of Pennsylvania School of
Medicine
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Monte A. Greer, M.D.
Professor of Medicine
Head of the Department of Endocrinology
University of Oregon Medical School
Portland, Oregon

Marie H. Greider, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Pathology
Washington University School of Medicine
St. Louis, Missouri

Melvin M. Grumbach, M.D.
Professor of Pediatrics
University of California
and Director, Pediatric Services
University of California Hospitals
San Francisco, California

Erlio Gurpide, Ph.D.
Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology
and of Biochemistry
Mount Sinai School of Medicine
New York, New York

Joel F. Habener, M.D.
Associate Professor of Medicine
Harvard Medical School
Endocrine Unit, Massachusetts General
Hospital
Boston, Massachusetts

Theodore J. Hahn, M.D.
Assistant Professor of Medicine
Washington University School of Medicine
and the Jewish Hospital of St. Louis
St. Louis, Missouri

Peter F. Hall, M.D., Ph.D.
Professor and Chairman, Department of
Physiology
California College of Medicine
University of California
Irvine, California

Reginald Hall, B.Sc., M.D., F.R.C.P.
Professor of Medicine
University of Newcastle Upon Tyne
and Physician, Royal Victoria Infirmary
Newcastle Upon Tyne, England

Madeleine Harbison, M.D.
Department of Medicine
Division of Medical Genetics
The Johns Hopkins Hospital
Baltimore, Maryland

Boyd W. Harding, M.D., Ph.D.
Professor of Medicine and Biochemistry
University of Southern California School of
Medicine
Los Angeles, California

Morey W. Haymond, M.D.
Assistant Professor of Pediatrics
Mayo Clinic
Rochester, Minnesota

Eileen Higham, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor in Medical Psychology
and Adjunct Professor of Psychology
Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral
Sciences
and Department of Pediatrics
The Johns Hopkins University
Baltimore, Maryland

Raymond L. Hintz, M.D.
Associate Professor of Pediatrics
Stanford University School of Medicine
Palo Alto, California

Michael F. Holick, Ph.D., M.D.
Assistant Professor of Medicine
Harvard Medical School
and Clinical Assistant in Medicine
Massachusetts General Hospital
Boston, Massachusetts

Richard Horton, M.D.
Professor of Medicine
and Chief, Endocrinology Section
University of Southern California Medical
Center
Los Angeles, California

Eva Horvath, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Pathology
Department of Pathology
University of Toronto
Toronto, Ontario

John Humphries, Ph.D.
Institute for Biomedical Research
The University of Texas at Austin
Austin, Texas

Robert Israel, M.D.
Associate Professor, Department of
Obstetrics and Gynecology
University of Southern California School of
Medicine
Los Angeles, California

Bernard H. Jaffe, M.D.
Professor of Surgery
Washington University School of Medicine
St. Louis, Missouri

Elwood V. Jensen, Ph.D.
Professor, Departments of Biophysics and
Theoretical Biology
and Director, Ben May Laboratories
The University of Chicago
Chicago, Illinois

Ulrich Keller, M.D.
Instructor in Medicine
Vanderbilt University Medical School
Nashville, Tennessee

Henry T. Keutmann, M.D.
Principal Research Associate in Medicine
Harvard Medical School
and Associate in Biochemistry (Medicine)
Massachusetts General Hospital
Boston, Massachusetts

John M. Kinney, M.D.
Professor of Surgery
Columbia University College of Physicians
and Surgeons
and Attending Surgeon
Presbyterian Hospital
New York, New York

Charles R. Kleeman, M.D.
Professor of Medicine and Chief, Division
of Nephrology
University of California at Los Angeles
School of Medicine
Los Angeles, California

Ronald Knudsen, Ph.D.
Institute for Biomedical Research
The University of Texas at Austin
Austin, Texas

**Kalman Kovacs, M.D., Ph.D., D.Sc.,
F.R.C.P.(c), F.A.C.P., M.R.C. (Path.)**
Associate Professor
Department of Pathology
University of Toronto
and Pathologist, St. Michael's Hospital
Toronto, Ontario

Stephen M. Krane, M.D.
Professor of Medicine
Harvard Medical School
Chief, Arthritis Unit and Physician,
Medical Services
Massachusetts General Hospital
Boston, Massachusetts

Dorothy T. Krieger, M.D.
Professor of Medicine
Mount Sinai School of Medicine
and Director, Division of Endocrinology
and Metabolism
Mount Sinai Hospital
New York, New York

Paul E. Lacy, M.D.
Mallinckrodt Professor and Chairman
Department of Pathology
Washington University School of Medicine
St. Louis, Missouri

Yiu-Kuen Lam, Ph.D.
Institute for Biomedical Research
The University of Texas at Austin
Austin, Texas

Richard L. Landau, M.D.
Professor of Medicine
The University of Chicago School of
Medicine
Chicago, Illinois

Elizabeth M. K. Leovey
Postdoctoral Fellow
Georgetown University School of Medicine
Washington, D.C.

John F. Liljenquist, M.D.
Assistant Professor of Medicine
Vanderbilt University Medical School
Nashville, Tennessee

Mortimer B. Lipsett, M.D.
Director, The Clinical Center
National Institutes of Health
Bethesda, Maryland

Iain MacIntyre
Director, Endocrine Unit
Royal Postgraduate Medical School
London, England

Jane E. Mahaffey, M.D.
Instructor in Medicine
Harvard Medical School
and Clinical Assistant in Medicine
Massachusetts General Hospital
Boston, Massachusetts

John R. Marshall, M.D.
Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology
University of California at Los Angeles
School of Medicine
Los Angeles, California

Robert W. Marshall, B.Sc., Ph.D.
M.R.C. Mineral Metabolism Unit
The General Infirmary, Leeds
Leeds, England

Luciano Martini, M.D.
Professor of Pharmacology and
Endocrinology
University of Milano
Milan, Italy

Renato Massa, M.D.
Department of Endocrinology
University of Milano
Milan, Italy

Franz M. Matschinsky, M.D.
Professor of Biochemistry and Biophysics
University of Pennsylvania School of
Medicine
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

G. P. Mayer, D.V.M., M.Sc. (Med.)
Professor of Physiology
College of Veterinary Medicine
Oklahoma State University
Stillwater, Oklahoma

Samuel M. McCann, M.D.
Professor and Chairman, Department of
Physiology
Southwestern Medical School
University of Texas Health Science Center
at Dallas
Dallas, Texas

Bruce S. McEwen, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
The Rockefeller University
New York, New York

John D. McGarry, M.D.
Professor of Internal Medicine and
Biochemistry
University of Texas Southwestern Medical
School
Dallas, Texas

J. M. McKenzie, M.D.
Professor of Medicine
McGill University School of Medicine
and Senior Physician and Director
Endocrinology and Metabolism Division
Royal Victoria Hospital
Montreal, Quebec

A. Wayne Meikle, M.D.
Associate Professor of Medicine
University of Utah School of Medicine
and Department of Medicine
Veterans Administration Hospital
Salt Lake City, Utah

James C. Melby, M.D.
Professor of Medicine
Boston University School of Medicine
and Visiting Physician and Head, Section
of Endocrinology and Metabolism
University Hospital
Boston, Massachusetts

Thomas J. Merimee, M.D.
Professor of Medicine, and Head, Endocri-
nology and Metabolism
University of Florida School of Medicine
University of Florida Hospital
Gainesville, Florida

Béla Mess, M.D., D. Med. Sci.
Professor of Anatomy
University Medical School
Pecs, Hungary

Boyd E. Metzger, M.D.
Professor of Medicine
Northwestern University Medical School
and Attending Physician
Northwestern Memorial Hospital
Chicago, Illinois

Claude J. Migeon, M.D.
Professor of Pediatrics
Johns Hopkins University School of
Medicine
Baltimore, Maryland

Daniel R. Mishell, Jr., M.D.
Professor and Chairman, Department of
Obstetrics and Gynecology
University of Southern California School of
Medicine
Los Angeles, California

John Money, Ph.D.

Professor of Medical Psychology
and Associate Professor of Pediatrics
Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral
Sciences
and Department of Pediatrics
The Johns Hopkins University
Baltimore, Maryland

Anthony D. Morrison, M.D.

Research Associate Professor of Medicine
University of Pennsylvania School of
Medicine
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Marcella Motta, M.D.

Department of Endocrinology and
Pharmacology
University of Milano
Milano, Italy

Hamish N. Munro, Ph.D., M.B.

Department of Nutrition and Food Science
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Mark R. Myers, B.S.

Research Assistant, Hypertension Service
Department of Medicine
Los Angeles County–University of
Southern California Medical Center
Los Angeles, California

Robert M. Neer, M.D.

Associate Professor of Medicine
Harvard Medical School
and Associate Physician
Massachusetts General Hospital
Boston, Massachusetts

Don H. Nelson, M.D.

Professor of Medicine
University of Utah College of Medicine
Salt Lake City, Utah

William D. Odell, M.D., Ph.D.

Professor of Medicine and Physiology
University of California Medical School at
Los Angeles
and Chairman, Department of Medicine
Harbor General Hospital
Torrance, California

Sergio R. Ojeda, D.V.M.

Department of Physiology
Southwestern Medical School
University of Texas Health Science Center
at Dallas
Dallas, Texas

Jack H. Oppenheimer, M.D.

Professor of Medicine and Physiology
and Head, Section of Endocrinology and
Metabolism
Department of Medicine
University of Minnesota School of
Medicine
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Lelio Orci, M.D.

Director, Institut d'Histologie et
d'Embryologie
Ecole de Medecine
Universite de Geneva
Geneva, Switzerland

Anthony S. Pagliara, M.D.

Associate Professor of Pediatrics
Assistant Professor of Medicine
Co-Director, Pediatric Endocrinology and
Metabolism
Washington University School of Medicine
and Associate Pediatrician
St. Louis Children's Hospital
and Assistant Physician
Barnes Hospital
St. Louis, Missouri

Johanna A. Pallotta, M.D.

Assistant Professor of Medicine
Harvard Medical School
and Assistant Physician, Department of
Medicine
Beth Israel Hospital
Boston, Massachusetts

**A. Michael Parfitt, M.B., B. Chir.,
M.R.C.P., F.R.A.C.P., F.A.C.P.**

Clinical Associate Professor of Medicine
University of Michigan Medical School
and Physician, Fifth Medical Division
and Director, Mineral Metabolism
Laboratory
Ann Arbor, Michigan

J. A. Parsons

Head: Laboratory for Endocrine
Physiology and Pharmacology
National Institute for Medical Research
London, England

Munro Peacock, M.B., Ch.B., M.R.C.P.

Honorary Consultant Physician
General Infirmary, Leeds
and Assistant Director, M.R.C. Mineral
Metabolism Unit
General Infirmary, Leeds
Leeds, England

Richard L. Phelps, M.D.

Assistant Professor of Medicine
and Assistant Professor of Obstetrics &
Gynecology
Northwestern University Medical School
and Attending Physician
Prentice Women's Hospital and Maternity
Center
Chicago, Illinois

Aldo Pinchera, M.D.

Associate Professor of Medicine
Cattedra di Patologia Speciale Medica II
University of Pisa
Pisa, Italy

Constance S. Pittman, M.D.

Professor of Medicine
University of Alabama School of Medicine
and Endocrinology Section
Veterans Administration Hospital
Birmingham, Alabama

Flavio Piva, M.D.

Departments of Endocrinology and
Pharmacology
University of Milano
Milan, Italy

Allan Pont, M.D.

Assistant Professor of Medicine
Stanford University School of Medicine
and Chief of Endocrinology
Santa Clara Valley Medical Center
San Jose, California

John T. Potts, Jr., M.D.

Professor of Medicine
Harvard Medical School
and Chief, Endocrine Unit
Massachusetts General Hospital
Boston, Massachusetts

Peter W. Ramwell, Ph.D.

Professor of Physiology
Georgetown University School of Medicine
Washington, D.C.

Samuel Refetoff, M.D.

Professor of Medicine
Pritzker School of Medicine
University of Chicago
Director of Thyroid Function Laboratory
Billings Hospital
Chicago, Illinois

Eric Reiss, M.D.

Professor and Vice Chairman
Department of Medicine
University of Miami School of Medicine
Miami, Florida

M. Markus Riek, M.D.

Chief Resident in Internal Medicine
University of Bern Medical School
Bern, Switzerland

William G. Robertson, B.Sc., Ph.D.

M.R.C. Mineral Metabolism Unit
The General Infirmary, Leeds
Leeds, England

Luis J. Rodriguez-Rigau, M.D.

Assistant Professor, Department of
Reproductive Medicine and Biology
University of Texas Medical School at
Houston
and Active Medical Staff
Hermann Hospital
Houston, Texas

Robert L. Rosenfield, M.D.
Associate Professor of Pediatrics
University of Chicago Pritzker School of
Medicine
and Wylar Children's Hospital
Chicago, Illinois

Griff T. Ross, M.D., Ph.D.
Deputy Director, The Clinical Center
National Institutes of Health
Bethesda, Maryland

Aldo A. Rossini, M.D.
Associate in Medicine
Joslin Research Laboratory
and Assistant Professor of Medicine
Harvard Medical School
Boston, Massachusetts

Jesse Roth, M.D.
Chief, Diabetes Section
National Institute of Arthritis, Metabolism,
and Digestive Diseases
National Institutes of Health
Bethesda, Maryland

S. I. Roth, M.D.
Professor and Chairman
Department of Pathology
University of Arkansas Medical Center
Little Rock, Arkansas

Corbin P. Roubesh, M.D.
Pritzker School of Medicine
The University of Chicago
Chicago, Illinois

Arthur H. Rubenstein, M.D.
Professor and Associate Chairman
Department of Medicine
University of Chicago School of Medicine
and Attending Physician, Billings Hospital
Chicago, Illinois

R. G. G. Russell, Ph.D., M.D., M.R.C.P.
Professor of Chemical Pathology
and Honorary Consultant in Human Me-
tabolism to Sheffield Area Health
Authority
University of Sheffield Medical School
Sheffield, England

Charles H. Sawyer, Ph.D.
Professor of Anatomy
University of California at Los Angeles
School of Medicine
and Brain Research Institute
Los Angeles, California

Melville Schachter, Ph.D.
Professor and Chairman, Department of
Physiology
University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta

Alan L. Schiller, M.D.
Assistant Professor of Pathology
Harvard Medical School
and Chief, Autopsy Pathology and Bone
Laboratory
Department of Pathology
Massachusetts General Hospital
Boston, Massachusetts

Gustav Schonfeld, M.D.
Professor of Preventative Medicine and
Medicine
Washington University School of Medicine
St. Louis, Missouri

Charles R. Scriver, M.D.
The deBelle Laboratory for Biochemical
Genetics
Departments of Pediatrics and Biology
McGill University-Montreal Children's
Hospital Research Institute
Montreal, Quebec

Robert E. Scully, M.D.
Professor of Pathology
Massachusetts General Hospital
and Harvard Medical School
Boston, Massachusetts

Gino V. Segre, M.D.
Assistant Professor of Medicine
Harvard Medical School
and Assistant Physician
Massachusetts General Hospital
Boston, Massachusetts

Robert Sherwin, M.D.
Assistant Professor of Medicine
Yale University School of Medicine
New Haven, Connecticut

Louis M. Sherwood, M.D.
Professor of Medicine
University of Chicago
and Physician-in-Chief and Chairman, De-
partment of Medicine
Michael Reese Hospital and Medical
Center
Chicago, Illinois

Pentti Siiteri, M.D.
Professor of Obstetrics
Department of Obstetrics-Gynecology and
Reproductive Sciences
University of California School of
Medicine
San Francisco, California

Ethan A. H. Sims, M.D.
Professor of Medicine, Department of
Medicine and Metabolic Unit
University of Vermont College of Medicine
and Attending Physician, Medical Center
Hospital of Vermont
Burlington, Vermont

Eduardo Slatopolsky, M.D.
Professor of Medicine
Department of Medicine
Washington University School of Medicine
St. Louis, Missouri

Keith D. Smith, M.D.
Professor, Department of Reproductive
Medicine and Biology
University of Texas Medical School at
Houston
and Active Medical Staff, Hermann
Hospital
Department of Internal Medicine
Houston, Texas

John B. Stanbury, M.D.
Professor of Experimental Medicine
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Charles A. Stanley, M.D.
Assistant Professor of Pediatrics
University of Pennsylvania
and Division of Endocrinology
Children's Hospital of Philadelphia
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Emil Steinberger, M.D.
Professor and Chairman, Department of
Reproductive Medicine and Biology
The University of Texas Health Science
Center at Houston
Houston, Texas

Donald F. Steiner, M.D.
Professor of Biochemistry and Medicine
Pritzker School of Medicine
The University of Chicago
Chicago, Illinois

Hugo Studer, M.D.
Professor of Medicine
Head of the Department of Medicine
University of Bern Medical School
Berne, Switzerland

Howard S. Tager, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Biochemistry
Pritzker School of Medicine
The University of Chicago
Chicago, Illinois

Roy V. Talmage, Ph.D.
Professor of Surgery and Pharmacology
Director of Orthopedic Research
Departments of Surgery and Pharmacology
University of North Carolina
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

Alvin Taurog, Ph.D.
Professor of Pharmacology
University of Texas Health Science Center
Dallas, Texas

Michael D. Trus

Postdoctoral Fellow in Biochemistry and
Biophysics
School of Medicine
University of Pennsylvania
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Roger H. Unger, M.D.

Veterans Administration Hospital
and Professor of Internal Medicine
University of Texas Southwestern Medical
School
Dallas, Texas

Robert D. Utiger, M.D.

Professor of Medicine
Endocrine Section
University of Pennsylvania
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Judson J. Van Wyk, M.D.

Kenan Professor of Pediatrics
University of North Carolina School of
Medicine
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

Gilbert Vassart, M.D.

Charge de Recherche F.N.R.S.
Institute of Interdisciplinary Research
Brussels University Medical School
Brussels, Belgium

Helmuth Vorherr, M.D.

Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology
and Pharmacology
University of New Mexico School of
Medicine
Albuquerque, New Mexico

John Wahren, M.D.

Professor of Clinical Physiology
Karolinska Institute and Huddinge
Hospital
Huddinge, Sweden

Yieh-Ping Wan, Ph.D.

Institute for Biomedical Research
The University of Texas at Austin
Austin, Texas

Chiu-an Wang, M.D., F.A.C.S.

Associate Clinical Professor of Surgery
Harvard Medical School
and Visiting Surgeon
Massachusetts General Hospital
Boston, Massachusetts

Michelle P. Warren, M.D.

Assistant Professor of Medicine and
Obstetrics and Gynecology
Columbia University College of Physicians
and Surgeons
Associate Attending Physician,
Departments of Medicine and Obstetrics/
Gynecology
The Roosevelt Hospital
New York, New York

Ann Ruhmann-Wennhold, M.D.

Associate Research Professor
University of Utah College of Medicine
Salt Lake City, Utah

Charles D. West, M.D.

Professor of Medicine and Biochemistry
University of Utah College of Medicine
Salt Lake City, Utah

John F. Wilber, M.D.

Chief of Endocrinology and Professor of
Medicine
Louisiana State University Medical
Sciences Center
New Orleans, Louisiana

E. D. Williams

Professor of Pathology
Department of Pathology
Welsh National School of Medicine
Cardiff, Wales

H. G. Williams-Ashman, Ph.D.

Professor of Biochemistry
Ben May Laboratory for Cancer Research
University of Chicago
Chicago, Illinois

Albert I. Winegrad, M.D.

Professor of Medicine
University of Pennsylvania School of
Medicine
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Richard J. Wurtman, M.D.

Professor of Endocrinology and
Metabolism
Laboratory of Neuroendocrine Regulation
Department of Nutrition and Food Science
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Margita Zakarija, M.D.

Assistant Professor
McGill University School of Medicine
and Assistant Physician
Royal Victoria Hospital
Montreal, Quebec

Walter S. Zawalich, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Physiology
School of Medicine
University of Pennsylvania
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

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