ENDOCRINOLOGY

VOLUME 3

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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 pedagogic 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 galleys. 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.

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