**Hepatocellular Cancer; Diagnosis and Treatment**  
Brian I. Carr ed,  
Humana Press, 2005. 291 pages  
ISBN: 1-588-29-125-1; $135

This book consists of a series of independent chapters on hepatocellular carcinoma. It brings together the fields of Hepatology, Surgery, Oncology, Pathology, and Diagnostic and Interventional Radiology. Most of the authors are from the University of Pittsburgh and the content reflects not only a review of the literature but the clinical and scientific experience of one of the largest liver transplant programs in the United States.

The book consists of 14 separate chapters and includes some excellent CT, MRI and angiographic images of hepatocellular carcinoma as well as some color photographs of benign and malignant tumors of the liver. There is a CD enclosed with the book, compatible with either PC or MAC. Each chapter is an entity in itself and the topics covered include: general epidemiology, clinical diagnosis and treatment options. There are detailed discussions of the pathologic aspects of HCC and molecular mechanisms of HCC along with discussion of their relevance to future diagnostic and prognostic markers of HCC and possible implications for future therapy. Discussion of the various classifications of HCC reflect the state of the art and the evolving changes in our understanding of the disease and how this reflects on the clinical management. The chapter on screening is excellent. The authors compare various screening modalities and discuss the sensitivity and specificity of each and emphasize the importance of screening in general. The chapter on imaging studies includes excellent images with characteristic findings. Individual chapters are devoted to each available treatment modality: radiofrequency ablation, transarterial chemoembolization, and percutaneous ethanol and acetic acid ablation therapy. Indications for resection and for transplantation are discussed.

Busy clinicians occasionally skip to the bottom line and this book has a final chapter “putting it all together.” We want to know the current recommendations for screening and which treatment modality is appropriate for which patients. The "practical guidelines" chapter proposed CT every 6 months as the imaging test of choice at Pittsburgh and I caution the reader to review the chapter on screening in detail before subscribing to this.

There are limits to any text that deals with a topic where there is rapid accumulation of knowledge and ongoing controversy and the author points this out in the introduction. When considering patients for transplant, certain criteria must be met. These are changing and the discussion of extended criteria used at some transplant centers was limited. The UNOS allocation for HCC under the MELD system has evolved over the last few years and discussion of this was too limited.

This is a well written text and should be a good reference book for those who see patients with HCC. I would recommend it for residents, fellows and practicing clinicians in these fields.

At the same time I received my copy of this book, I received my *Clinics in Liver Disease on Hepatocellular Carcinoma* edited by Morris Sherman MS BCh, PhD, FRCP. This too was an excellent summary of the state of the art. It did not include discussions of the molecular mechanisms of HCC that are detailed in the book written by Dr. Carr, but the clinical sections are inclusive, up-to-date, concise and informative.

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**The Clinician's Guide to Gastrointestinal Oncology**  
Kochman M  
Slack Inc, 2005  
ISBN: 1-55642-682-8; $59.95

A reference guide on gastrointestinal oncology claiming practical utility for the busy clinician while integrating the three specialties of gastroenterology, oncology and surgery is a large undertaking which necessitates sufficient attention to each discipline. *The Clinician’s Guide to Gastrointestinal Oncology* by Michael Kochman, MD, manages not only this, but more. The Clinician's Guide to GI Series (series editor Gary Lichtenstein) has produced some highly effective and readable guides for inflammatory bowel disease, liver disease, and peptic disorders. This new addition is an all encompassing reference for clinical understanding and management of the gastrointestinal cancer patient.

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Kochman has assembled a group of authors who are leaders in their respective fields and compiled the topics in a well-illustrated, well-referenced and readable text. Even the chapters on surgical approaches to GI neoplasms quote from both the surgical and medical literature. There is a 16 page color atlas in addition to a slew of tables, charts, algorithms, radiographs, and illustrations. The text is easy to follow despite the small print and lack of bold or italics. The summary sections are useful, but bulletized points would have helped the reader focus in on the key facts (i.e. detailing the top ten important "take-home" points of the chapter).

The first half of the book is anatomically based from esophagus to colon with extensive references ranging from clinical epidemiology to surgical management options, as well as radiation and chemotherapeutic decisions. The unique utility of this book prevails in the second half. Chapters on the assessment and management of cancer pain, nutritional issues, the role of interventional radiology, and chemoprevention provide a much broader and integrated understanding of the management issues facing cancer patients. The chapter on pain includes a highly resourceful algorithmic table on the NCCN (National Comprehensive Cancer Network) cancer pain guidelines.

The field of GI malignancies has been enhanced over the past 10 years by advances in technology. Newer experimental diagnostic modalities are discussed in a chapter focusing mostly on spectroscopy, but giving little attention to serum or stool molecular markers. Appropriate attention is given to the increasing diagnostic and staging role of endoscopic ultrasound in a very well written chapter by Janak Shah.

Integration of the main three specialties (gastroenterology, hematology/oncology and surgery) has become a prerequisite to taking care of patients with GI tumors. However, knowledge beyond these specialties, into the areas of interventional radiology, pain anesthesiology, nutrition, and psycho-social issues is required to treat the patient and the disease. This book is not intended to be a complete resource for any of the individual specialties. A surgeon cannot learn GI cancer surgery from this book; the oncologist cannot learn all of GI oncology from this book; and the gastroenterologist cannot learn all of GI malignancy from this book. But, it will give a more current and holistic understanding to these specialists about the multidisciplinary approach to these patients. Any clinician whose practice involves a good number of patients with GI malignancies would be well advised to keep this book in close proximity.

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Portal Hypertension: Pathobiology, Evaluation and Treatment
Sanyal AJ, MBBS, M.D. and Shah VH, M.D.
Humana Press, 2005
ISBN: 1-588-29-386-6; $165

The clinical manifestations of portal hypertension have always made for great physical exam findings and confirmation of cirrhotic liver disease. However, this topic has also been oversimplified by many when considering the actual pathophysiologic basis and ramifications of the process. Fortunately, the “Clinical Gastroenterology” series edited by George Y. Wu, MD, PhD has added portal hypertension to its list of diseases to elucidate. Currently, this is the most thorough and complete review of the newest developments and of our current understanding of portal hypertension. Summarizing the vast amount of data that has been accumulated in the last 10 years on this subject would seem to make for laborious reading, but surprisingly this is not the case.

The book is structured into 6 parts which logically progress from the historical origins of liver disease to future treatments. Each section builds upon the next actually allowing for an enjoyable start to finish read. The historical perspective presented in part one is truly insightful as we read of the brilliant minds and amazing cultures of the past that struggled with liver pathology and function. All readers, including the lay, would find this section especially engaging and humbling considering the amount of work that has been done on this subject.

The second part focuses on the anatomical, cellular, and molecular aspects of liver disease and the development of portal hypertension. The anatomical review is easy to read and descriptive, but would have
been better served by further illustrations. To maximize this section, I had to dust off my Netter but you can utilize your anatomy book of choice. Content topics are neatly laid out at the beginning of each chapter making for easy reference or skimming. I found this to be helpful when I needed to go back to an earlier part of the book to re-read the cellular mechanisms that lead into the clinical pathophysiology later discussed in the book.

The remaining two-thirds of the book beautifully builds upon the molecular and biological machinery into an enhanced clinical understanding of portal hypertension complete with the most up-to-date treatment options. For example, the endoscopy-centered clinician would not want to miss out on chapters 13–18 which summarize management and treatment strategies for esophageal and gastric varices. The hepatologist consultant might find the “special circumstances of portal hypertension” section helpful with topics ranging from pregnancy, pediatric issues, noncirrhotic portal hypertension, pulmonary and renal complications.

Specifically designed tables help identify areas of future research in each major area of portal hypertension. This lessens the confusion on the relevant unanswered questions and distinguishes what is certainly known from what is theorized. Flow diagrams simplify the physiology of such topics as ascites formation, spontaneous dilutional hyponatremia, and hepatorenal syndrome. This sets up a framework for the clinical physiology that can then be enhanced by newer molecular understandings and pathways of disease progression. There are tables that list the various mediators, peptides and factors in various disease processes (i.e. vasoactive factors potentially involved in regulation of renal perfusion and vasoconstriction in cirrhosis). These tables and flow diagrams make for quick selective reference for the busy researcher or clinician.

GI fellows will find this book particularly informative and possibly helpful in research or selecting an area of interest. The clinician will undoubtedly benefit from the molecular review and clinical updates. Given the amount of molecular detail, the researcher would also benefit from this comprehensive review.

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