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Book Review

Dictionary of Pharmacovigilance; Amer Alghabban; 527 pages, Pharmaceutical Press, London, UK and Grayslake, IL, 2004.

The discipline of pharmacovigilance is the process of monitoring adverse events or other problems associated with the use of drugs, biologics, vaccines, blood products, and herbal therapies during research and post marketing clinical use. Pharmacovigilance is undertaken with the purpose of identifying, evaluating, and preventing unrecognized risks or changes in the risk to benefit profile for these agents. The need for pharmacovigilance, previously known as drug monitoring, has grown out of the pharmaceutical industry's international research and marketing activities, an increased emphasis on patient safety, and the regulatory pressures to bring drugs to market sooner with limited human testing.

This text is the first of its kind in the English language and provides a comprehensive list of over 3100 abbreviations, terms, and phrases with definitions for each one. Set up alphabetically, without an index, the text covers terminology in many areas including words used for regulatory and legal purposes, statistical analysis and interpretation, and clinical practice. The information presented is not limited to terminology used in the United States but includes common and not so common terms and titles used across the world. Countries using a unique term are identified after the word(s) or abbreviation. Agency names and abbreviations are also listed. Regulations and a summary of their subject matter used in the United States, European Union, and other countries are interspersed throughout the dictionary.

Definitions throughout the text are often presented as detailed but concise summaries and are generally well referenced. These descriptions draw upon a compilation of information usually going well beyond a basic explanation. For example, one full page of text, supported by three references, is used to define pharmacovigilance. Readers with a health care background may not find the definitions for the medical terminology valuable. In most cases, a medical dictionary or a clinical therapeutics textbook would provide similar and more complete information for the medical terms.

An index or other cross-referencing system would be a helpful addition to the text. The manner in which the information in the *Dictionary of Pharmacovigilance* is structured assumes you know the name or abbreviation you are trying to locate. For example, if you did not know the name of a regulatory agency in another portion of the world responsible for medication safety, this text would not assist you. In general, the text will also not help you in identifying a string of related terminology. Main entries in the dictionary are identified in bold and definitions in some cases point to other related key terms with separate definitions. This system of tying related terminology together is helpful but falls short of providing a complete list of similar terms or topics.

In summary, the *Dictionary of Pharmacovigilance* is a good reference providing brief summaries of key pharmacovigilance terminology in the English language. Nonhealth care professionals or those needing international interpretations will find the text most useful. References used in the definitions point to the original guidelines and regulatory documents. This book would be a recommended resource for anyone involved in the research, regulatory, or drug development functions for drugs, biologics, vaccines, blood products, and herbal therapies.

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