Book & New Media Reviews

Handbook of Pain Relief in Older Adults: an Evidence-Based Approach

F. Michael Gloth III (Ed.). The Humana Press Inc., 2004. 264 pages. ISBN 1-58829-217-7

As the population ages, the number of older people requiring effective pain assessment and management will increase. The objective of this volume is to integrate the growing research literature with clinical experience to arrive at practical assessment and treatment guidelines. It is made up of 13 chapters, six by the editor, which cover pain assessment, management and political issues. The chapter on assessment, by the editor, provides a general overview but lacks information on the multiple components of a comprehensive assessment, such as the evaluation of psychological distress or physical functioning. Seven chapters about various pain management strategies follow. Of particular interest to anesthesiologists would be the strong chapters on pharmacotherapy and interventional strategies. Other chapters review the role of spirituality, nutraceuticals and rehabilitation medicine. These are less evidence-based than the book's subtitle would suggest, but this is not surprising given the paucity of research in this field. The remaining chapters provide an overview of the American political system and advocate for legislative change and the use of electronic medical records. This information would be of limited interest to those outside the United States. Unfortunately, little attention is given to the neurobiology of aging and pain or to psychological factors and interventions. Despite these gaps, this volume is a useful introduction to pain management in the elderly.

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