

Bronchial Asthma

CURRENT CLINICAL PRACTICE

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Bronchial Asthma

*A Guide for Practical Understanding
and Treatment*

FIFTH EDITION

Edited by

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Dedication

*They asked if the sneezles
Came after the wheezles,
Or if the first sneeze came first.¹*

This text is dedicated to helping the many millions of people who suffer from asthma.

¹From "Sneezles," by A.A. Milne, in *Now We are Six*. New York, E.P. Dutton and Co., 1927.

Series Editor's Introduction

Usually a chronic asthmatic has some favorite substance to inhale or to smoke...ordinary tobacco cigarettes are sometimes helpful.

—William Osler, *The Principles and Practice of Medicine*,
9th edition, 1922

The science of diagnosing and treating asthma has advanced dramatically. *Bronchial Asthma: A Guide for Practical Understanding and Treatment, 5th Edition* is an important resource for primary care physicians who want a concise yet comprehensive overview of the diagnosis and treatment of asthma. Asthma is common, with a prevalence of more than 11%, and as such, it is a condition that primary care physicians encounter daily. Because most asthma care is provided by family physicians, internists, and pediatricians, it is important for those of us in primary care to be experts in the care of asthma. In *Bronchial Asthma: A Guide for Practical Understanding and Treatment, 5th Edition*, Drs. Gershwin and Albertson provide the information we need to have a high level of expertise in the care of pediatric and adult patients with asthma.

Bronchial Asthma: A Guide for Practical Understanding and Treatment, 5th Edition reviews diagnostic approaches including the use of radioallergosorbent assay testing and pulmonary function testing. It also covers environmental and occupational influences on asthma—important but often underemphasized topics in many texts—that are covered in detail here. Finally, the book discusses in detail both acute and ongoing management of asthma. Internists, family doctors, and pediatricians can be confident that by understanding the material in *Bronchial Asthma: A Guide for Practical Understanding and Treatment, 5th Edition*, and by having this book as a reference on their shelf, they will have the knowledge to provide high-quality care to their patients with asthma.

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Preface

The prevalence and socioeconomic impact of bronchial asthma continue to escalate. Thirty years ago, when the first edition of *Bronchial Asthma: A Guide for Practical Understanding* was published, nearly every patient with chronic asthma was seen by a specialist. Now the number of asthma sufferers simply makes the latter practice an anachronism, and the vast majority of patients is cared for by primary care physicians in internal medicine, pediatrics, and family practice. In fact, asthma remains the most common chronic childhood illness, and is among the most common chronic adult diseases. Despite improved medications, increased awareness, and a better understanding of the pathophysiology of this disease, mortality and morbidity continue to rise. Both national and international consensus positions that offer guidance as to treatment approaches have been published.

The importance of the primary care physician and provider in the appropriate diagnosis and management of this disease cannot be overestimated. The management options in asthma are changing rapidly with the advent of new drugs and approaches. The recent introduction of dry powder inhalers, as well as combinatorial therapies with steroids/long-acting β -agonists, have gone a long way toward improving patient compliance and response. The introduction of Xolair[®] and the likelihood that other biological modifiers will appear open up exciting vistas for patients with asthma.

Bronchial Asthma: A Guide for Practical Understanding and Treatment, Fifth Edition will discuss these newer treatments, but its emphasis remains on, and directed at, primary care providers, who must be able to face the challenge of diagnosis and the management of asthma in a variety of patient subpopulations. We will continue to emphasize the definition, medications, and the use of asthma treatment plans. However, we will also provide definitive focus on the special needs patient, including the pediatric patient, the pregnant patient, and the patient undergoing surgery, as well as the common issues of exercise and asthma, pulmonary aspergillosis, occupation, recreational drug use, and psychological/social issues. The care of patients with asthma needs to be individualized and we need to reduce the toxicity of the drugs we use. There is increasing concern about the role of systemic and oral corticosteroids in inducing osteoporosis and, especially, avascular necrosis.

The goal of *Bronchial Asthma: A Guide for Practical Understanding and Treatment, Fifth Edition* is to provide a basic framework upon which a successful treatment option can be built. We will likewise emphasize the need for patient education because this is an essential element to good asthma care. Finally, the editors and authors are particularly grateful to Nikki Phipps who has contributed enormously not only to the fifth edition, but also to the first through fourth editions.

M. Eric Gershwin, MD
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