chi-square analyses, risk and odds ratios, hypothesis testing (p values), analysis of variance (ANOVA), correlation, simple linear regression analysis, and time-to-event analysis (survival analysis).

Many published studies did not have samples large enough to rule out clinically important differences, even if such differences were to be found in the data. Thus, the fact that sample-size calculations are described in their own chapter (Chapter 7) appropriately emphasizes this important, if neglected, aspect of study design.

Chapter 8 describes the logic behind diagnostic test characteristics and prognostic studies, such as sensitivity, predictive values, likelihood ratios, receiver operating characteristics curves, and Bayes’s theorem. By nature, these concepts are difficult to understand in the short-term. Any difficulty encountered by readers should be attributed to the concepts, not to the text, which, as in the rest of the book, provides clear explanations and illustrative examples.

Chapters 9 and 10 cover other topics of interest, such as the notion of causality, differences between clinical and statistical significance, differences between absolute and relative risk, and how to use statistical software programs.

Publication is the final stage of research, and an appealing part of the book is Chapter 11, which describes how to write and publish a scientific article. The important points are addressed, including issues of authorship, journal selection, rejection, and even dealing with the media.

The book closes with a list of the steps to follow in planning and conducting clinical research. The index is adequate.

In summary, this book does what the author intended it to do, and does so with great skill and grace. It is reasonably priced and will be a valued reference for some time to come. What’s not to like?


This 5th edition incorporates information on new pharmaceuticals and has a chapter on the effects of foods and additives. The Introduction indicates that the book was designed to be a resource for family physicians, internists, allergists, and nurse practitioners, and it does achieve that, and more. One might ask why a textbook such as this is needed on asthma, particularly when the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute guidelines are readily available online, as are review articles and nearly all peer-reviewed publications. However, this book provides in one place a compilation, interpretation, and summary of scholarly work and guidelines into largely clinically relevant topics.

One of the greatest problems with textbooks, in general, is the time lag caused by the editing, printing, and distribution process. In many chapters in this book the most recent research cited is from 2003 or 2004, which is not a critique of any of the authors, but rather a problem of medical textbooks in general. However, one of the greatest problems with the medical literature is the seemingly endless number of articles on a topic; therefore, a resource that compiles masses of information into a format that both educates and provides clinically useful information in less than 400 pages is invaluable.

There are some particular gems among the chapters in this text. The third chapter, on pulmonary function testing, is excellent; it provides a comprehensive enough overview of the concepts and measurements, as well as indications and interpretations, to make it a useful guide to primary-care physicians, house officers, and fellows. Similarly, the chapter on childhood asthma provides useful information, sensibly organized, and includes medication overviews and dosing.

The chapter on infectious and environmental triggers is one of the most comprehensive reviews I have read on this topic. The chapters on special problems in asthma, such as foods and additives, are particularly timely and well done, because there has been so much information in the lay press; so this is a topic about which primary-care and other physicians are probably interested and seeking knowledge.

There are a few problems with the text: there are some unusual abbreviations, grammatical errors, incorrect references, and factual errors. There is also marked variability among the chapters, in organization and presentation of recommendations. Several authors are very clear on which assertions and recommendations are based on research, versus on expert or consensus opinion, and which recommendations represent the author’s own opinion, but this is not the case in all the chapters. In the vast majority of chapters, however, the material is presented in a very organized and useful manner.

Acknowledging those minor limitations, this textbook provides in a single volume a large compilation of what has become an overwhelming amount of information about asthma. It is more than just a clinical resource, as it incorporates and summarizes decades of research to inform the clinician on theories and the direction of asthma research. This is an excellent resource for those interested in more than just the dose of a medication or a management strategy; it’s got everything, and is thus a tremendous resource for primary-care practitioners, subspecialists, and fellows in training.

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The author of this review reports no conflict of interest.
Learn more from WebMD about bronchial asthma, including symptoms, diagnosis, and treatment. Ever hear the term “bronchial asthma” and wonder what it means? When people talk about bronchial asthma, they are really talking about asthma, a chronic inflammatory disease of the airways that causes periodic “attacks” of coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath, and chest tightness. According to the CDC, more than 25 million Americans, including 6.8 million children under age 18, suffer with asthma today. Allergies are strongly linked to asthma and to other respiratory diseases such as chronic sinusitis, middle ear infections, and nasal polyps. 

Bronchial Asthma: A Guide for Practical Understanding and Treatment, Sixth Edition, is a fully updated version of a widely respected classic on the diagnosis and management of asthma. Discussing the disorder in all relevant patient groups, including a variety of patient subpopulations, this invaluable title continues to emphasize the definition, medications, and practical use of asthma treatment plans. As in previous editions, the book also continues to define and focus on the special clinical problems of the pregnant patient, the patient undergoing emergency treatment, as