

# **MANAGEMENT OF COMMON GASTROENTEROLOGICAL PROBLEMS - A MALAYSIA AND SINGAPORE PERSPECTIVE**

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This is a book which the editors have produced for local general practitioners and non-gastroenterological specialists. It provides approaches to diagnosis and treatment of common gastroenterological problems in this part of the world. It is very useful that such a book is available as the disease pattern here is somewhat different from that in Western countries, which are the source of many of our medical textbooks.

The book consists of twenty-four chapters which cover a wide range of clinical problems. In addition to chapters discussing various diseases, there are also chapters on hepatitis vaccination and laparoscopic surgery. These are useful as a number of general practitioners' patients may have questions about hepatitis vaccination due to the prevalence and publicity of hepatitis locally. Also, laparoscopic surgery is an evolving area and a chapter on it would help to give an overview of the field today.

In the arrangement of chapters, the editors might want to consider, when preparing the next edition, placing the chapter on upper gastrointestinal haemorrhage immediately after that on peptic ulcers. Currently, the two are separated by a number of other chapters. Apart from this, the arrangement of chapters generally flows in a fairly logical sequence.

The book is generally readable. The print is of a reasonable size and the information is placed under various appropriate headings. Also, data is often summarised into tables which makes it easier to read. A point which is particularly useful is the fact

that in almost every chapter, there is at least one flowchart which suggests an approach to the management of the problems discussed. This helps to give the reader a bird's-eye view of the management plan.

However, despite the use of headings to divide the information into various areas, there is a lack of consistency in the headings. For example, the sections on history have been variously labelled as history, clinical features, symptoms, presentation, and clinical presentation. There is also inconsistency with regard to the inclusion and exclusion of conclusions and summaries, as well as discussions of aetiology and pathogenesis.

In essence, however, this is still a rather readable book which should serve its purpose well - that of providing an approach to diagnosis and treatment for general practitioners and non-gastroenterological specialists, with a bias towards a Malaysia and Singapore viewpoint. The editors have also noted that some medical students have been seen to use this book. The book appears fairly suitable for this category of readers too. However, as the editors have pointed out in their preface, this was not meant to be a comprehensive textbook. As such, bearing in mind that medical exams may sometimes require a fair amount of theoretical knowledge, medical students may find it useful to supplement their reading of this book with other texts as well.

**Dr Colin Tan**