

Introduction

The world is set to experience major demographic changes. Health care systems will have to consider the health needs of older people to a far greater extent than before. In the past, drug treatment of older people tended to be presented in a somewhat negative perspective with a focus on adverse drug reactions, poor compliance and the frequent lack of evidence of benefit. However, the last ten years has seen major advances in our knowledge and understanding of clinical pharmacology and effective therapeutics in the elderly.

This year has been designated the *United Nations Year of the Older Person*. We therefore hope this book will be a useful text for those involved in prescribing for the older person. The first ten chapters describe the underlying principle of prescribing in this age group, including perspectives from sociology, health economics and the developing world which are all now of increasing importance in global health care delivery. The second half of the book encompasses reviews of treatment for specific therapeutic problems. We have sought to provide an overview of current research, describing the evidence base underlying current practice and the important clinical pharmacology and therapeutic questions that require further study as we enter the 21st century.

We are extremely grateful to the authors for their contributions to this book and hope it proves useful to those readers wishing to undertake research as well as optimise drug therapy in clinical practice.

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February 1999