

Foreword

In all developed countries the need for prescription medicines increases markedly with advancing age. There is abundant evidence that appropriate use of drugs in the elderly can produce striking benefits giving both “years to life” as well as “life to years”. There are, nevertheless, difficulties in optimising the drug therapy of older people: the physiological changes that accompany ageing tend to increase individuals’ sensitivities to pharmacological agents; the coincidental pathological changes that may occur further increase susceptibility to the effects of drugs as well as the need for co-medication to manage concomitant disease increases substantially; lastly, the possibility of incremental interaction.

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that over the past 25 years there has been a burgeoning interest in geriatric pharmacology and pharmacotherapy. This has been reflected not only in voluminous research literature but also in efforts by the pharmaceutical industry, and national drug regulatory authorities, to ensure that elderly patients have access to safe and effective new medicines. The editors of this contribution to the literature Peter Crome and Gary Ford, are themselves distinguished both as clinical geriatricians and as geriatric pharmacologists. They have assembled an eminent group of colleagues to help produce a text that will be an important source of information and

inspiration to health professionals engaged in clinical practice, research, development and regulation of drugs for older people.

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