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BRITTLE DIABETES

edited by John C. Pickup
Blackwell Scientific Publications

The contributions of experienced clinical investigators from the United Kingdom, United States, Denmark, Italy, and Germany compose this well-written book on a topic of current debate. In the introduction, Drs. Harry Keene and John C. Pickup set the tone by acknowledging that brittle diabetes is "an emotionally, highly charged subject" with "controversy about its definition." By defining intrinsic metabolic instability of glucose, they provide a background for what is meant by the term "brittle." This discussion is appropriate—indeed, it is necessary—because the term has been widely used in the clinical literature without attention to careful definition.

The remainder of the text is divided into three segments. The first, "Clinical Problems of Brittle Diabetes," consists of three chapters describing clinical features of intrinsic metabolic instability in children, similar features in adults, and finally, in a group of patients unresponsive to attempts at rigorous control with subcutaneous insulin infusion. The authors' experience in both direct patient care and clinical research in their respective areas enhances the practical applicability of the section.

The section about pathogenesis of brittle diabetes includes such topics as the effects of residual beta-cell function, antibodies to insulin, illness, and response to stress, as well as factors that may affect insulin absorption and action. A reasonable balance between primary metabolic and psychosocial considerations is maintained.

The third major section, which deals with treatment approaches, is introduced by a chapter listing conditions that may contribute to unstable control. The remaining chapters, which make up nearly a third of the book, evaluate various ways to optimize insulin administration. Continuous subcutaneous insulin infusion, methods to enhance insulin absorption, and intraperitoneal and intravenous insulin administration are discussed.

Brittle Diabetes is likely to be useful for both primary

care physicians and physicians who have a large diabetic-patient practice. The first chapters present a general overview aimed at the former audience; the latter chapters will be of interest to physicians willing to undertake management of patients whose diabetes is difficult to control. An inevitable conclusion to be drawn by anyone reading this book is that despite international expertise and complex clinical investigations, the servomechanisms of glucose regulation used by the pancreas and liver of patients without diabetes are not easily mimicked by any of the currently available techniques for insulin administration. Until more sophisticated methods of glucose regulation are available, brittle diabetes will continue to frustrate even the most sophisticated clinicians.

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DIABETES IN PREGNANCY: TERATOLOGY, TOXICITY AND TREATMENT

by Lois Jovanovic, Charles M. Peterson, and Kurt Fuhrman
Praeger Publishers

This book is designed to be a comprehensive overview of laboratory and clinical investigation of diabetes in pregnancy as well as give current recommendations for treatment. It is written for physicians in all stages of training as well as both primary care and specialty practitioners.

The teratology segment describes the risk for and type of congenital anomalies associated with diabetes mellitus, based on animal and human data. Most of the information in the toxicity section relates to human pregnancies. The emphasis is on complications other than congenital abnormalities, such as macrosomia, growth delay, and fetal metabolic consequences, as well as some theories for the use of glycosylated protein determinations and human insulin in pregnancy. The treatment

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