Clinical Practice Protocols in Oncology Nursing

D.S. Prescher-Hughes, C.J. Alkhoudairy
Jones and Bartlett, 2006
675 pages
RRP: $73.00

This book is an excellent resource, not just for oncology nurses but for pharmacists and doctors alike. It provides a quick and easy reference to current treatment protocols for many cancers. This is not just a book full of chemotherapy protocols, but also includes chemotherapy/radiotherapy regimes. The author states in the preface that “Clinical Practice Protocols for Oncology Nursing has been a work in progress for 20 years”. From reading through the book I can certainly see why.

Each protocol contains 11 different categories or ‘recipes’ for administration, including agents involved, baseline laboratory tests required prior to administration, premedications needed, initiate IV (for the intravenous solution required if specific), administration information for each drug in the regime, major side-effects, supportive drugs, antiemetic protocol post chemotherapy, treatment schedule, and the estimated number of visits. Finally, each protocol includes a patient details section for height/weight and BSA, along with patient name, ID number and diagnosis. There are also physician details and signatures for those responsible for calculating the dosage. As most medical protocols only contain the drugs and administration schedule, the additional information like major side-effects and antiemetics post-completion is more pertinent to nursing staff who administer these medications.

The treatment schedule information is a bonus for unit managers and day care units, as they plan follow-up appointments and subsequent treatments, making scheduling a much easier process.

Finally, in a time where most of our work is computerised, the book comes equipped with a CD-ROM, enabling the downloading of all the protocols found in the book on to department PCs. The CD-ROM allows changes to be made that are relevant to individual departmental policies and procedures for IV fluids, fluid volumes, antiemetics and other supportive medications. Individual protocols can then be printed for each patient to store in their treatment record for future reference.

The one thing I feel is missing from these protocols is a section for the names and signatures of those administering the medications. If these were included it would allow departments to utilise these protocols as pre-printed chemotherapy charts.

Despite this, we are currently looking at installing the CD-ROM on to our nursing computers to enable nurses to have access to this vital information. This book is a great reference to anyone involved in the administration of sometimes complex chemotherapy/radiotherapy regimes.

Megan Hayes,
Oncology Unit, Austin Hospital, Melbourne, Victoria.