Bronchial Asthma

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Bronchial asthma is an important clinical problem that is frequently encountered by clinicians all over India. However, in spite of the major advances that have occurred in our understanding of this disease, in the Indian setup, pulmonary function testing is seldom done, bronchial asthma is empirically diagnosed and the patients are treated sub-optimally. No wonder, the patients with bronchial asthma seek medical care from practitioners of several alternative systems of medicine including “fish medicine”.

The updated, second edition of the book Bronchial Asthma authored by Professor D. Behera, is a welcome addition to the sparse teaching material available on this disease from India. The book is divided into 21 chapters starting from an overview regarding the epidemiology of asthma and covers the aetiology, pathophysiology, pathology, diagnosis, prognosis, complications and management of bronchial asthma. Separate sections also deal with the pharmacological management of asthma and inhalation therapy. The book also presents a balanced overview regarding the therapeutic approach to patients with acute severe asthma and chronic bronchial asthma. Recently published, evidence based, British Thoracic Society Guidelines (2003) for the management of bronchial asthma are also summarised in the book. Certain important aspects regarding asthma in children are also covered in a separate chapter. This well referenced book also provides useful data regarding the epidemiology of asthma in India and also provides information from the recent International Study of Asthma and Allergies in Childhood (ISAAC).

The text is clear and the layout is good. In this book, diagrams and flow charts have been judiciously used to explain difficult concepts. Though adequate, some of the line diagrams and their labelings could be improved in the subsequent editions. The author has correctly stressed the importance of performing pulmonary function testing and other objective tests in confirming the diagnosis of bronchial asthma. From a postgraduate teaching point of view, more detailed description of the protocols used for testing for reversibility along with the figures of actual spirometry recordings depicting the normal, classical obstructive and restrictive patterns and the “reversibility” of airways obstruction would have been more useful. Overall, this book is a commendable effort and is good value for money. Besides pulmonologists, postgraduate students, physicians, paediatricians and others interested in bronchial asthma should find this book useful in their day-to-day practice.

Dr Alladi Mohan
Associate Editor
Asthma is a common long-term inflammatory disease of the airways of the lungs. It is characterized by variable and recurring symptoms, reversible airflow obstruction, and easily triggered bronchospasms. Symptoms include episodes of wheezing, coughing, chest tightness, and shortness of breath. These may occur a few times a day or a few times per week. Depending on the person, asthma symptoms may become worse at night or with exercise. The correct definition of bronchial asthma may be given by the British Thoracic Society, which states: Asthma is a chronic inflammatory condition of the airways, causes of which are not completely understood. As a result of inflammation airway becomes narrow-reactive and easily responsive to various stimuli.