

UTMJ Reviews – Internal Medicine

Osteoporosis

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Editors: John C. Stevenson and Robert Lindsay

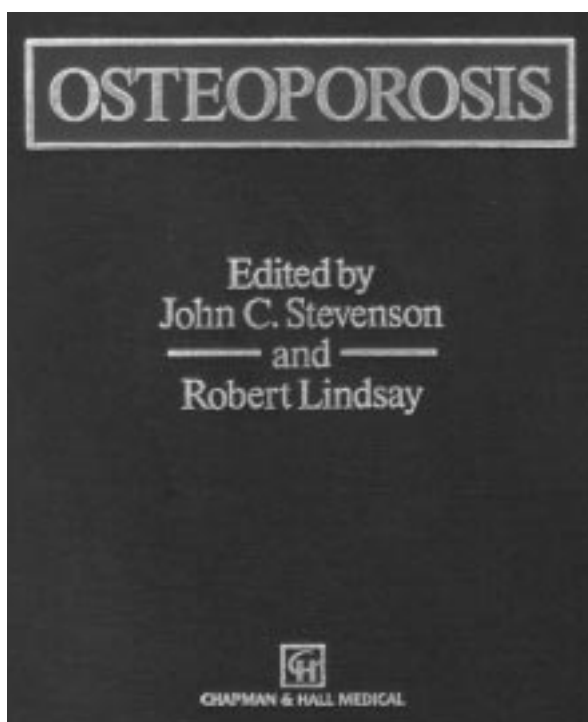
Publisher: Chapman & Hall Medical

Date of Publication: 1998

Number of pages: 380 pages

Cost: Hardcover edition, \$157.95 (CDN)

Strengths:	An exhaustive discussion and review, with references, of all aspects of osteoporosis, from basic scientific principles to clinical aspects; excellent chapters on bone histomorphology and studies in therapeutic options
Weaknesses:	The topics are presented in a disorganized fashion and the highly-specialized nature of the content leads to segments that are irrelevant to a majority of practising clinicians
Audience:	Graduate students doing research in metabolic bone disease, practising physicians specializing in osteoporosis



"The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new lands, but in seeing with new eyes." Marcel Proust, the French novelist, must have known something about the study of disease. Osteoporosis has been a well-known disease entity for many years and is commonly encountered in clinical practice, but we are continually learning new information using, as Monsieur Proust suggests, new 'eyes' or techniques. *Osteoporosis*, edited by John C. Stevenson and Robert Lindsay, is an in-depth look into the disease which the World Health Organization defines as "a systemic skeletal disease characterized by low bone mass and microarchitectural deterioration of bone tissue, leading to increased bone fragility and a consequent increase in fracture risk."¹ To accomplish this daunting task, the book is a product of contributions from international experts (mostly from the United States and United Kingdom) in the field of metabolic bone disease. With the demographics of the population shifting towards older age groups, the number of new cases of osteoporosis will only increase. The morbidity and mortality from injuries related to osteoporosis

are also extremely high and, as such, it is a clinically significant entity that warrants further probing.

Osteoporosis is organized into 19 chapters. The book begins with the basics of bone structure and the pathogenesis and epidemiology of osteoporosis. This is followed by a discussion of bone measurement and then a series of chapters dealing with various therapeutic studies and approaches to osteoporosis such as physical activity, estrogen, and bisphosphonates. The book finishes with aspects of rehabilitation, orthopedic intervention, and a look at future strategies for the study of osteoporosis. The order of topics presented in the book leaves the reader jumping back and forth between chapters. The text starts with the basic science of bone structure and then jumps to a clinical correlate, namely osteoporosis and its epidemiology, then returns to the basic science of bone structure and methods of measuring it. The book would be better suited if it finished reviewing all of the basic science, starting with bone structure and the basics of bone measurement, before going on to its clinical applications.

Each chapter is clearly written and easy to understand, however there are points within the basic science portion of the book that are quite esoteric. The latter chapters on the relationships between osteoporosis and treatment strategies are the most relevant to clinicians. There are a number of references which allow the reader to examine particular studies and sources more closely. However, stylistically, the way in which the references are placed within the text disrupts the flow of the reading. For example:

"It comes from studies of hormonal responses in normal and malignant osteoblasts (Luben and Cohn, 1976; Martin *et al.* 1976; Partridge *et al.*, 1981) and from direct demonstration of specific binding by autoradiography to osteoblasts in vitro (Silve *et al.*, 1982; Evely *et al.*, 1991) and in vivo (Rouleau *et al.*, 1986)."²

A suggestion would be to make use of superscripts and numbers at the end of the each chapter.

In comparison to other resources, *Osteoporosis* is a highly specialized book aimed at those who are involved in the study of metabolic bone diseases. Due to this specialized approach, relevant clinical points get lost in the deluge of minutiae and citations from various studies. The degree of specialization is similar to that found in *Osteoporosis: Diagnostic and Therapeutic Principles*.³ In *Osteoporosis: A Clinical Guide*,⁴ the clinical points are more delineated and

there is less emphasis on providing an exhaustive review of the disease.

Given the highly specialized knowledge found within this book, the cost of the book is a relatively fair price. However, I would not recommend purchasing this book unless you have a particularly keen interest in osteoporosis and/or are studying in this highly specialized field. Although *Osteoporosis* is not meant to serve as a primary text, it can be useful as an additional reference book for medical students, residents and practicing physicians who are interested in knowing more about particular aspects of osteoporosis.

References

1. World Health Organization (WHO) *Study Group: Assessment of fracture risk and its application to screening for postmenopausal osteoporosis*. WHO Technical Report Series 843. Geneva, Switzerland, 1994.
2. Martin TJ, Dempster DW. Bone structure and cellular activity. In: Stevenson JC, Lindsay R, eds. *Osteoporosis*. London: Chapman & Hall, 1998: page 16.
3. Rosen CJ, ed. *Osteoporosis: Diagnostic and Therapeutic Principles*. Totowa: Humana Press Inc., 1996.
4. Woolf AD, Dixon AS. *Osteoporosis: A Clinical Guide 2nd ed.* London: Martin Dunitz Ltd., 1998.