

The Teaching of Pharmacology

In most American medical schools, the principal course in pharmacology is given during the second year. Generally, this is the only formal exposure of the student to the subject.

The nature of the pharmacology instruction has been a matter of much debate but little change. Although it is in reality a clinical as well as a basic science, it is taught primarily as a basic subject, with emphasis on the principles of drug action, a review of specific drug groups, examples of drug applications, and the broad fundamentals of prescription writing.

After the usual course in basic pharmacology, most medical students are given no formal training in the applied aspects of this field--in clinical pharmacology--but left to acquire what practical training they can absorb from a variety of courses in the several fields of clinical medicine.

Perhaps the most serious criticism of this informal exposure is that it fails to equip the soon-to-be physician with the essential scientific and critical attitudes towards the use of drugs and the evaluation of drug promotion--probably the most intensive promotion to which he