

Foreword

I first met Professor Walter Siegenthaler in the 1970s while he was at the University of Zürich, where both he and his late wife, the superb clinician Doctor Gertrud Siegenthaler-Zuber, were admired for their many accomplishments and dedication to the advancement of medicine. At that time, Professor Siegenthaler helped me establish a program to bring cardiologists from the Baylor College of Medicine and the Methodist Hospital in Houston, Texas, to Switzerland to study the pioneering balloon angioplasty work of Andreas Gruentzig. Subsequently, he honored us by serving as a Visiting Professor at Baylor, exemplifying the best of Swiss medicine. Now, 30 years later, Professor Siegenthaler remains at the leading edge of medicine, as this expertly realized book in your hands attests.

Differential diagnosis is the fundamental methodology of modern clinical medicine: we note the patient's symptoms; we develop hypotheses for the affliction and propose treatment; and we adjust treatment based on the patient's response. Thus, differential diagnosis requires the physician to be observant, knowledgeable, thoughtful, thorough, and organized, qualities that could also be used to describe the conceptualization and execution of the following pages. In the last few decades, we have seen stunning advances in the level of clinical care and diagnostic procedures available across the spectrum of human diseases. The sophistication of contemporary nosology is truly impressive.

On the other hand, the rapid turnover of medical information can prove daunting to many clinicians, and the application of the latest evidence to

our daily interactions with patients may seem unclear or too complex. Siegenthaler's *Differential Diagnosis in Internal Medicine* reminds us to approach diagnostic problems in a practical, systematic, and critical manner, remembering that each patient's circumstance is unique and that it is every doctor's responsibility to exercise his or her best educated judgment to present rational choices about the most probable diagnoses and optimal treatment courses. Occam's Razor, which advises us that the simplest explanation is usually the correct one, all things being equal, is an important precept in diagnostic medicine, yet doctors must also be flexible and adaptable to the eccentricities of every case. Thus, physicians should not expect to see a zebra when confronted with a horse, but they should be able to recognize the zebra on the rare occasion that it makes an appearance.

I believe that the scholarship, clinical skill, and practical wisdom that Professor Siegenthaler and his colleagues share with us in this text are indispensable resources for the medical community. The wealth of illustrative photographs, informative tables, and up-to-date discussion of issues in internal medicine will prove very useful in daily clinical practice.

Antonio M. Gotto, Jr., MD, DPhil
The Stephen and Suzanne Weiss Dean
Professor of Medicine
Weill Cornell Medical College
Provost for Medical Affairs
Cornell University
New York, USA