

Forward by Philip Troen
Reprinted from the first edition
of the Handbook of Andrology

“What a piece of work is a man”

Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act ii, scene 2, line 316

Why a handbook of andrology? Some handbooks are published to bring together multiple aspects of a diversified subject. Some handbooks are designed to present an overview of a rapidly expanding subject for those working in the field while other handbooks are intended to codify the progress already made. Although there are elements of each of these approaches in this handbook of andrology, our main purpose is to present to scientists/clinicians early in their careers the scope, importance, and excitement of our discipline.

What is andrology? Simplistically, one might say that andrology is to the male what gynecology is to the female. That is, andrology deals with matters affecting the male reproductive system. The earliest use of the term andrology, as reported by Mikko Niemi, appears to have been in 1891 in the Journal of the American Medical Association, reporting on the formation of the American Andrological Association. Little more was heard from that association and it was not until the latter half of this century that there emerged an andrology journal in 1969 and an active andrology organization, Comite Internacional de Andrologia, in 1970. In the quarter century since, there has been a veritable explosion of journals and publications, of societies and congresses, and of workshops and symposia devoted to andrology. Thus, we appear to be on a rapidly rising growth curve of knowledge and application in andrology. The scope of modern day andrology is strikingly indicated by the range of topics discussed in this handbook. Written by distinguished leaders in their fields, these topics were chosen to indicate the exciting breadth of andrology and the opportunity it holds for graduate students in the biological sciences, veterinary students, and medical students.

Why become an andrologist? In choosing a career one, first of all, tries to identify an area of interest. Then one looks at the opportunity to succeed and the likelihood of making a contribution. As an andrologist for 40 years, I can testify to the continued excitement

and interest the discipline has held for me. As noted above, there has been a rapid escalation of growth so that our discipline now ranges from genetic studies to pubertal changes in the male and from infertility and assisted reproduction techniques to disorders of the prostate, sexual function and contraception. Advances in these and other areas have been made possible by a remarkable series of clinical studies and scientific discoveries using the classical disciplines of physiology, biochemistry, neuroscience, and molecular biology. As we have entered each new stage of understanding and science, there has been no waning of the stimulus that I and my colleagues experience. At the same time, because of the multidisciplinary nature of andrology, unsolved problems present themselves and the opportunities for advancement and success continue to expand. As Alexander Albert has noted, "Nature has experimented lavishly with the reproductive system." This fact provides both challenge and opportunity. Andrology covers a wide spectrum from before conception to aging. As you peruse this handbook, we hope you will appreciate the scope of the field and share our excitement in the study of andrology.