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Preface

Earlier editions of this book, which were titled *Decision Making in Periodontology*, illustrated the thought processes used in determining optimal therapy for individual patients as conceived by various experts of the field. This fourth edition takes learning a step farther by providing readers with the means to use the knowledge they have already acquired in the practice of periodontics. Renamed *Critical Decisions in Periodontology*, this fourth edition describes common clinical problems and how practitioners go about deciding what should be done. The approach offers an algorithm (decision tree) for solving each clinical problem as it may be experienced in practice. Chapters describe common clinical problems and, guided by the thinking of experts, allow the reader to arrive at decisions that would take much longer to contrive if guided only by classical teaching texts. Several commonly available additional readings are provided for further details.

This updated and enhanced text should continue to serve the needs of several groups in the fields of dental care. Experienced clinicians may seek answers to specific problems and compare their methods with those outlined. Teachers of periodontology may use this text as a stimulus to rethink modes of presenting information and as a model to test whether students have grasped the concepts they have been taught and are able to use them in a practical manner. Undergraduate students will find this material useful in integrating concepts that they have been taught in a more conventional way, and postgraduate students may argue the merits of the decision-making process as outlined and rewrite the decision trees. Auxiliary personnel will find the material helpful in understanding why specific things happen in certain ways within the dental office. In the rapidly progressing and contentious field of periodontology, some of the decision making presented by our international group of authors may be controversial; however, if the decision trees presented here stimulate thought and discussion, the book will have fulfilled its purpose.

Many thanks to Brian Decker who conceived the idea of books that help dental care providers use their knowledge to make decisions in dental care, and to Charmaine Sherlock and Paula Presutti, who edited this text. Thanks also to all of those talented individuals who contributed chapters. Special thanks to Dr. Eric Curtis, who provided the illustrations, and to my family, Fran, Scott, and Greg, for their encouragement during the preparation of this book.

Walter B. Hall

October 2002
To my wife, Frenella, and my sons, Scott and Gregory, for their love, support, and understanding during the preparation of this text
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