Introduction

It is my great pleasure to introduce the Medical Approaches part to our readers. While this part covers a variety of topics, ranging from the neurobiological basis of pharmacological agents’ utility in treating chronic pain to innovative agents and drug delivery systems, this part could not possibly address all medication-related issues facing the practicing physician. Rather than attempt to cover the entire spectrum of topics, our goal was to provide our readers with a body of work that serves as a reference as to the most common classes of medications a health care provider might prescribe on a daily basis. In addition to the chapters on frequently prescribed agents, this part reviews the adverse effects of opioid analgesics, monitoring of opioid use and abuse, the emerging role of cannabinoids in the treatment of pain, emerging trends in pharmacogenomics, drug interactions and polypharmacy. Experts from both academia and private practice, by collaborating throughout this part, provide the reader with an opportunity to learn from different perspectives on subjects that deeply affect both realms of medical practice. I must recognize and thank my distinguished, dedicated colleagues for sharing their expertise through contributions to this part. Were it not for the encouragement and fortitude of Dr. Tim Deer, this project would not have come to fruition. Additional gratitude is due to Ms. Elektra McDermott and Ms. Shelley Reinhardt, both from Springer, who helped to bring this part as the final product to the finish line.