
Increasing ambulatory care and reducing inpatient stay have become major health trends. Paediatricians and paediatric surgeons can justifiably be proud that they have been ahead of the times. Day case surgery, suitably delivered, appeals to policy makers, purchasers, patients, doctors, and nurses alike. New day case units are being set up all over the country in recent years. The publication of Dr Morton’s and Mr Raine’s textbook is therefore very timely. Although different aspects (organisational, anaesthetic, surgical, etc) of the book may have been covered in relevant specialty textbooks and journals, this book is the first of its kind to devote itself comprehensively in a single volume to the topic of paediatric day case surgery.

It starts with a chapter on history and reminds us of the long tradition of paediatric day case surgery in Glasgow – practised by James Nicholl as early as 1899. Some of the arguments he put forward are as pertinent today as they were at the turn of the century.

I found the chapter on facilities a little too brief. Planners for the establishment of new paediatric day case units or improvement of existing day case units may wish for more details. Description of the actual layout and staffing of a large day case unit, such as that in Glasgow, and a small successful unit elsewhere could provide useful models for planning.

Patient selection, assessment, and preoperative preparation are presented in great detail. Tables on the exclusion criteria for paediatric day case surgery and the American Society of Anaesthesiology classification of physical status are particularly useful and should be made compulsory references for any staff involved in the admission of patients. Personally, I will place copies of these two tables on the notice board of my clinic and the day case unit. The risk, inconvenience, and organisational chaos that result from an inappropriate admission to a day case unit cannot be over emphasised and not infrequently an entire operating list can be ruined because of omitting to observe guidelines for exclusion as a day case.

There is an excellent description of anaesthetic management. Principles and details of both general anaesthesia and local anaesthesia are clearly presented in the text, supplemented by superb coloured illustrations. I enjoyed reading different methods of local anaesthesia. There is now a lot of emphasis on the quality of delivery of minor surgery and pain relief is undoubtedly one of the most important factors. Alternatively, operation of Emla cream has done much to allay children’s fear of insertion of a needle before induction of anaesthesia. Despite the popularity of Emla cream, perhaps not everybody is aware that Emla cream contains lidocaine and prilocaine anaesthetics and that the cream should be administered at least one hour before the procedure. Postoperative pain relief is equally important and modern techniques for infiltrating relatively long acting bupivacaine either into the wound or as nerve blocks should now be standard practice in paediatric day case surgery. The vivid description of various nerve blocks makes the reader feel that he/she can become an expert in their administration following the step by step instructions. While the effects of local administration of different systemic anaesthetics are less clearly defined, this may be the next area for improvement in paediatric day case surgery. It is sometimes not appreciated that when the patient is discharged home in their family car, effects of the local anaesthesia may wear off, resulting in considerable stress.

The textbook is comprehensive and relevant. Some of the illustrations in the book, however, may carry the risk of tattooing unless the ink is removed from the line of incision before surgery. My personal preference is to use two vertical arrows above and below the lesion pointing at it without encroaching on the proposed transverse incision. Description of the operations in this chapter should give sufficient information for non-specialists to teach practitioners, anaesthetists, and nurses to participate constructively in the team care of their patients. Laparoscopic surgery is a rapidly expanding field and, although its role in children remains to be defined, some simple laparoscopic procedures are likely to work their ways into the repertoire of paediatric day case surgery. Laparoscopy is not mentioned in this textbook but I believe it is likely to become a very useful laparoscopy for impalpable testes, laparoscopic ligation of testicular vein for varicocele, etc will feature in a new edition.

The book rounds off with useful instructions on postoperative management. Nevertheless, more details would be welcome here. In some units, ‘certificates of bravery’ are issued to children – these are well earned and often much appreciated. Leaflets of discharge advice containing specific information about the relevant procedure are useful, for example a leaflet on circumcision will tell parents that their son should have a bath the day after the operation and thereafter that the penis may look sore and swollen for the next few days but not to worry as it will soon look normal again.

Paediatric day case surgery is here to stay. This book contains a succinct description of how to achieve it effectively and safely. It is highly readable and provides an excellent reference for any person involved in providing day case surgery for children and is therefore highly recommended.

PAUL TAM
Clinical reader in paediatric surgery


Paediatric urology is now a well accepted subspecialty. The British Association of Paediatric Surgeons recommends that there should be one full time consultant urologist in a regional centre serving 2.5 million population. There can be no question that the best results in managing major urological prob-
Paediatric Day Case Surgery

Paul Tam

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