

There is considerably more to the manual than the foreword by Edwina Currie, ‘a Minister with a commitment to prevention and health promotion’. It is loosely modelled on the ‘Red Book’ on paediatric infections produced by the American Academy of Pediatrics and updated every two years. Primary paediatric care in the United States is largely provided by primary care paediatricians and the Red Book is almost a bible: you can deviate from the scriptures but at your peril and likely your patient’s peril too.

Is the BPA manual aimed primarily at general practitioners, hospital or community based paediatricians, or does it have a potentially wider audience including clinical medical officers, health visitors, and medical students? I would say that all the above would find value in this book, which might be construed as a polite way of saying that the target readership was somewhat unclear.

The manual opens with interesting epidemiological data on incidence and mortality of childhood infections. The first main section deals with clinical problems (neonatal infection, respiratory infection, rash, fever, urinary tract infection). This section could readily be expanded, for the benefit of junior and senior hospital paediatricians, to include other clinical scenarios (for example, infections of bone, soft tissue, and the central nervous system).

The second section covers infections caused by almost 50 specific pathogens. This is the uneasiest part of the manual. In the interests of brevity the topics are often covered too cursorily to do more than drive the reader to a more definitive text. Some annotations, such as that on HIV infection, are valuable summaries but others (all Haemophilus influenzae infections in two pages) are too condensed. My main concern about this section again was its target audience.

The third section covers immunisation and closely follows the excellent Department of Health publication known as the ‘Green Book’. The influence of Dr David Salisbury, an ex-paediatrician, and Dr Christine Miller from Colindale can be clearly seen in the Green Book, which finally makes some sense of the indications and contra-indications for childhood immunisations. The BPA Steering Committee responsible for the manual wisely asked Dr Salisbury to sit on the committee and there is strong consistency between the manual and the Green Book. There is little fence sitting now in either book on important issues. The contraindications to pertussis immunisation are clearly delineated and, although some are less controversial than others (why is fever to 39.5°C within 48 hours of pertussis vaccine a contraindication to further doses?), the authors are to be congratulated on a difficult job well done.

The fourth section of the manual deals with practical issues surrounding immunisation, the sort of everyday problems such as egg allergy and delayed immunisations on which Dr Nicoll and many others are frequently consulted. These are beautifully handled, and together with the introduction to the third section covering general points on vaccination, consent, and technique provide a valuable adjunct to the Green Book, of use to ‘givers’ and ‘advisers’. One comment: at p. 258 the authors state that immunodepressed children should not be given live vaccines, yet later on the same page the immunodepressed children must be immunised with the mumps, measles, rubella vaccine (the former is correct except for children with HIV infection). This unfortunate apparent contraindication is due to poor wording and should be corrected for the next edition.

The bane of my life is enquiries about malaria prophylaxis so I am extremely grateful to the authors for the fifth section on travel abroad, and particularly the antimalarial recommendations, which are difficult to find elsewhere. These are the current recommendations from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, soon to be changed, so although the rationale for the different regimes is incomprehensible, at least we can be consistent.

The manual is therefore something of a consistent egg (no reference to Edwina intended). The good parts are often very good, and the first two sections could be expanded or modified in what I hope will be regular revisions of this valuable book. I think the BPA are to be applauded for their brave initiative in undertaking this venture, and hope they are encouraged for sharing his wealth of paediatric knowledge through writing. All paediatricians should read The Normal Child to appreciate the wide range of body function, whether it be stool frequency or sleep patterns. I have often consulted the Development of the Infant and Young Child, with its delightful illustrations. Symptoms and Signs of Disease in Childhood emphasises the importance of history taking and clinical examination, often overlooked in these high tech days. My wholehearted thanks to Professor Illingworth for guiding me through my paediatric training.

C Ewing
Senior Registrar in Paediatrics
St Mary’s Hospital
Manchester
make this the first of a series of BPA handbooks.

I would like to acknowledge Dr Martin Moncrieff’s assistance in reading the book and providing helpful comments.

D Isaacs
Wellcome Trust Lecturer
John Radcliffe Hospital, Oxford


This book is an excellent example of a teaching manual with its emphasis on participation rather than lectures. It is clear and simple without being patronising. I now know how to sharpen needles, store water for reuse, and to put the box of vaccine in the shade of a tree, if my car breaks down.

The WHO gives immunisation a high priority. Training large numbers of health workers to administer vaccines is vital and they have drawn up a training programme for these people. This programme has been used, modified, and rewritten. They have now published this as a training manual. It is primarily for workers in developing countries, but I think its approach to training and practical ideas have much to offer people in 'developed' countries. How often do we forget the importance of the advice 'be reliable and punctual', 'be polite and friendly'?

The opening pages discuss approaches to training. There is an emphasis on helping people to understand by means of exercises, questions, case studies, and discussions, rather than lectures. There is also specific advice on planning a training session. The rest of the book is divided into eight modules for field workers on practical aspects of running an immunisation programme—for example, vaccines and how to look at them, preparing for an immunisation session, how to evaluate your own immunisation programme. Each module consists of clear, simple information with appropriate practical work. Widespread use of the programme should have ironed out most problems. The error in labelling the illustrated syringe (0.5 instead of 0-05) is presumably because in practice a real syringe is used for demonstration purposes.

This material would be essential for anyone working in the field of immunisation in developing countries. The original modules have apparently not always been easily obtainable. The book gives valuable insight into the problems faced by immunisers in developing countries—for example, the emphasis on maintaining a cold chain and the practicalities of organising outreach sessions in the open air. It also illustrates the positive attitude to immunisation by the WHO (children should be immunised even if unwell). It is also a very good model of teaching methods applicable in all countries in many fields.

C Pullan
Consultant Community Paediatrician
Nottingham Health Authority


This book attempts to mould into one volume information for the pathologist, radiologist, and geneticist. The text is in four sections: (1) general aspects of disease, (2) systemic disease, (3) radiology and imaging, and (4) medical genetics. In the preface the editors say that their targets are the pathologist, laboratory scientist, obstetrician, and paediatrician.

To reach such a wide audience they have recruited 59 contributors from six countries, including 29 from the United States and 20 from the United Kingdom. Editorial control of this number of contributors must be extremely difficult and American and English spellings are used in various chapters so that one reads about ‘paediatrician’ and ‘pediatrician’ and ‘foetus’ and ‘fetus’ depending upon the origin of the author. Another problem faced by the editors was delayed publication. On page 637, Drs Simoni and Brambati from Milan state at the end of their chapter on fetal karyotyping: ‘In December 1985, when we wrote this chapter, we focused the technical and diagnostic problems related to first trimester CVS on the basis of our experience that was just lower than 1,000 cases. By now (June 1988) our experience has been extended to 2520 diagnoses . . . . Contributors who submit their chapters early have more work in updating but the Italian doctors managed to include six references from 1986 and two from 1987 in their updated chapter. The death of Dr Douglas Bain, one of the coeditors, in January 1987 must have been a major reason for delay in publication.

Overall this is a book for the pathologist rather than the clinician. Of the contributors there are only one or two obstetricians and paediatricians but no neonatologist. The longest section, on systemic pathology, is probably the best, although there are some areas of overlap. The section on radiology is quite short but is liberally illustrated with radiographs, ultrasound scans, and magnetic resonance images.

The fourth section, on medical genetics and perinatal diagnosis, begins with a scholarly discussion of genetic screening by Dr Seamus Cahalane from Dublin. He begins by quoting from Shakespeare’s Love’s Labour’s Lost: ‘These are begot in the ventricle of memory, nourished in the womb of pia mater, and delivered upon the mellowing of occasion’. These words, although uttered as pretentious jibberish by the pedant are as apt a description of the chapter as is the irony of the play’s title. Later in this section Drs Alan Michelson and Stuart Orkin from Boston provide a concise summary of perinatal diagnosis by analysis of fetal DNA. Gene mapping, DNA cloning, southern blotting, and restriction fragment length polymorphism all crop up as expected in modern textbooks, but they have a role in perinatal diagnosis not only of haemoglobinopathies but also of phenylketonuria, ornithine transcarbamylase deficiency, Duchenne muscular dystrophy, and cystic fibrosis.

The editors have been largely successful in their aim to produce a tripartite textbook. Future editions would be improved by correction of areas of overlap. This book should be most useful to practising and training perinatal and general pathologists and a copy should be available in all pathology departments. It will also provide a useful reference for practising obstetricians and paediatricians and each large maternity hospital should have one. At a price of £135 I doubt whether many paediatricians will buy a personal copy.

H L Halliday
Consultant Paediatrician
Royal Maternity Hospital, Belfast


A ‘simple book’ is offered by the author,