

medical administration, explanation of the computer as part of medical machines, advice on computer data collection, computer aided diagnosis, treatment, and teaching. I found the section on computer aided medical decision making very helpful as it explained some of these concepts so clearly that I was able to continue to understand it beyond the time of actually reading it. The author backs up his opinions and explanations with good references and provides other valuable information such as addresses of on line databases (such as Medline).

Another word to those who instinctively dislike computers: they are here to stay, they can work evil by tangling confused clinicians into time wasting tasks, and they may be used by those in power to spread illusory irrelevant information to hide vital problems. However, they are strengthening our vision in computed tomography, extending our memory in on line literature databases, and supporting our wisdom in decision making. They have no morality but we have the responsibility to remain vigilant by understanding their potential for doing both good and harm. This book, provided it is updated as time moves on, is a valuable weapon in this important role of the clinician.

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**The State of the World's Children 1988.** Pp 86: £2.95 paperback. UNICEF, Oxford University Press, 1988. ISBN 0-19-261723-0.

The best thing about this book is its ability to inform the reader in under 100 pages what we (as paediatricians and as citizens) can do to make children healthier. For those who wish to read no further, the keys are:

- Better information to parents and children about simple health technologies.
- Antipoverty measures (including fairer trade and aid policies).
- Common cause between health workers, educators, the media, and big business in putting children first.

The *State of the World's Children* is UNICEF's Annual Report on global child health, aimed at a lay readership. It is cheap and well presented with fine graphics. It emphasises achievements rather than dwelling on tragedies and sometimes the glowing reports are too good to be true. The book is a marvellous source of good examples and a reminder of our global responsibilities, as well as of what we have in common with many developing countries. The data that pack the last few pages are a source of chilling wonder; they encourage inter country comparisons, suspect though these may be. Contrast Costa Rica (gross national product \$1300, under 5's mortality 23/1000 live births) with Saudi Arabia

(gross national product \$8850, under 5's mortality 105/1000 live births):

	% Rural population with access to drinking water	% Adult literacy rate (male/female)	TV receivers per 1000 population	% Defence expenditure
Costa Rica	82	94/93	77	3.0
Saudi Arabia	68	35/12	269	36

\*% Of central government expenditure.

Many examples are given that we can learn from. In Bangladesh, immunisation messages appear on matchboxes and in Colombia on electricity bills. Again in Colombia, high school pupils visit families at home to discuss oral rehydration. In Nepal, comic books and songs describe hygiene and diarrhoeal disease. The report emphasises the power that knowledge conveys and is critical of doctors for failing to inform their patients sufficiently.

This report should be at the elbow of every paediatrician and their unit manager. When will we have a 'State of Britain's Children'? It might just embarrass us into action.

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