BOOK REVIEWS


Can pocket size reference books replace the specialist consultant at the bedside? The editors' aim was to provide concise summaries and annotated bibliographies for common paediatric infectious disease problems. In particular the handbook was designed to contain authoritative opinion and guidance for busy clinicians faced with important management issues.

While reading this book I tried to imagine that I was in a hectic clinic or in casualty in the middle of the night. Although the book claims to cover a wide range of infectious diseases, and carries chapters on the immunocompromised host, the newborn, and travel prophylaxis, it was extremely difficult to extract the relevant information. I found the text too closely spaced, with poor use of subheadings. Remarkably, tables and diagrams were virtually absent from this book. The management guidelines were vague and in some cases out of step with current thinking. The annotated bibliography was frustrating, over inclusive in some areas and sparse in others, the references were biased to American authors and contained few papers published within the last two years.

Excellent reference books such as Textbook of Pediatric Infectious Diseases edited by Feigin and Cherry or Principles and Practice of Infectious Diseases edited by Mandell, Douglas, and Bennett will not fit into your pocket, but in contrast, they provide an authoritative view of the subject that is easy to source, even in the middle of the night. Edelson and Noble have failed to produce a suitable alternative.

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Few textbooks can, like ‘the newly elected mayor, lay aside all prepossessions, and be like Caesar’s wife, all things to all men’. Hospital Paediatrics was first published in 1984, designed for the doctor resident in paediatrics, and has proved to be immensely popular with paediatric staff and among those training for membership.

The book was born of a collection of clinical protocols written in Nottingham. The advice given therefore tends to be somewhat dogmatic but is always reasonable, and in a book such as this lengthy debate would be out of place. We are told in the preface that the book is not for senior paediatricians, and as if in evidence, the further one gets from one’s own areas of special interest the more readily the advice becomes acceptable.

This second edition retains the problem orientated approach and distinctive format dividing each chapter up according patterns of clinical presentation. It offers an increased amount of background information but maintains an emphasis on management. This includes a discussion on appropriate use of investigations, and full outline of general and specific therapies.

There has been quite considerable revision throughout, notably in the chapters on cardiology and neonatal medicine. The renal chapter contains a useful brief discussion of urinary tract investigations, and some well reproduced radiographs. The inclusion of a chapter on the shocked child is welcome, but it is a little disappointing. It is one of the more wordy sections, makes insufficient use of lists and tables which are used elsewhere in the book to good effect, and some parts try to include discussion of equipment, theory, and practical recommendations in the same paragraph. The new edition contains worthwhile changes to a well known and widely used text. Sir David’s book is likely to maintain its popularity among doctors training in paediatrics – the short textbook that our current senior house officers and registrars are most likely to buy.

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